NEW MEXICO QUARTERLY

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Winfield Townley Scott — John Wheelwright and His Poetry

Daniel Curley — The Day of the Equinox (story)

Geoffrey Wagner — Charles Spaak and the Thesis Film

POET SIGNATURE XVIII : ROBERT HUTCHINSON

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THE EDITOR'S CORNER

IN THE 10's and 20's the majority opinion was that this country represented some new kind of earthly perfection. Perhaps in a gin and Ford way it did, but the social criticism that showed its underside was important. It worked for balance and realism. And because it was important it was interesting (e. g., Mencken, Anderson, Hemingway, Dos Passos. . .). Today the majority opinion is that, because this country has been surrounded by the world, we live in a new kind of earthly hell. Perhaps in a hydrogen and hysteria way we do. But the social criticism that keeps exposing the obvious is not important. It works for imbalance and unrealism. And because it is not important it is not really interesting. From Philip Wylie to a *New Yorker* story to symposia in *Partisan Review*. To hit the side of a barn is no trick, whether you use a stiletto or a pumpkin.

The age of the Expatriate gives way to the age of the Disaffiliate (Lawrence Lipton's term). One washes hands of the whole thing and concentrates on one's personal hell, or goes into science or disengaged criticism. All of these choices represent action and offer as reward Knowledge. As against contemplation and capital t Truth.

This is interesting because it is right in terms of necessity. It seems we are in one of those periods in history when action and Truth get out of workable balance. For the time being, the latter has lost most of its weight. As an operating principle, Truth is hardly allowed to matter today. At least no truth beyond the fact that life is in mass danger.

What else can really (i.e., in reality) matter compared to that? Morality? Presumably one bad girl started it all; and if, slogging alone in our lead suit we should chance upon her under some remote mountain, we are not apt to lecture her on ethics. Once you posit human life, the preserving of it is the only basic morality. Which is perhaps why the wisest men have never seen Truth as an excuse for killing, though it remains a favorite, and as many people have been killed for truth as for falsehood. One remembers Raskolnikov's dream toward the end of *Crime and Punishment.*

Perhaps there is only one moral crusade currently available: a no-war to make the world safe for life.

CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN ADAIR, formerly a member of the teaching staff in anthropology at Cornell, is now Research Associate, doing work in the southwest on the Navajo and Zuni Indians. He is the author of *The Navajo and Pueblo Silversmiths* (University of Oklahoma Press).

LORRAINE NAUSS CALHOUN lives in Florida. "The Annual Picnic" is her first publication in fiction.

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The Antioch Review

THE EDITOR'S CORNER

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DANIEL CURLEY is Assistant Professor of English at State Teachers College, Plattsburgh, N.Y. He has published a good many stories, most recently "A Spring" (*New-Story*, November 1952) and "The Night of the Two Wakes" (*Accent*, Summer 1953).

ELLIS FOOTE lives in Moab, Utah. Most of his publication has been in poetry, including three books and a number of poems in various magazines.

MARVIN FOX, a Contributing Editor of *Judaism*, is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Ohio State University. He has published a good deal of work in philosophy and religion.

ROSE GRAUBART, who did the cover symbol, recently had her first show at the Morris Gallery, N.Y.C.

CLARK GRIFFITH has published material on American literature in *Modern Philology, University of Toronto Quarterly* . . . He is Instructor in English at Harvard

ROBERT HUTCHINSON has published short stories and poetry in *Harper's Magazine, New Yorker, Voices* . . . A book of his poems will be published this year by Alan Swallow.

CHARLES KAPLAN is Assistant Professor of English at Roosevelt College, Chicago. He has published criticism in *The Explicator, American Literature, Antioch Review* . . .

LESLIE KATZ has written on the arts for *Partisan Review, Art News*, and others. Presently working on fiction and essays, he lives in New York City.

GEORGE BRANDON SAUL is Professor of English at the University of Connecticut. Among his recent books are *The Shadow of the Three Queens* (Ancient and Medieval Irish Literature and Its Backgrounds) and *Handbook of English Grammar and Writing Conventions*, both published last year by Stackpole Co. He is at present engaged on *Prolegomena to the Study of Yeats's Poems*, in collaboration with T. R. Henn and R. K. Alspach.

WINFIELD TOWNLEY SCOTT, a well-known poet, is doing a series of literary essays combining reminiscence and critique, of which "John Wheelwright and His Poetry" is one. Others previously published include " 'Our Town' and the Golden Veil" (*Virginia Quarterly*) and "A Journal for Henry Beston" (*Discovery* #3).

ELIZABETH SPARHAWK-JONES is represented in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Addison Gallery of American Art, the Murdock Collection of the Wichita Art Museum, and numerous private col-

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Daniel Curley

THE DAY OF THE EQUINOX

IT MAY seem strange that Michael Pegnam was glad he was asked to work on Saturday for no pay except a meal on the company. But he was glad. It was something different, something that would set this week apart from all the other weeks of his first winter in New York, and might even divide the winter from the spring.

He was automatically aware of the weather when he came out of the subway that morning. It was obviously a fine day, and he looked on this as a hopeful sign. The sun was higher than it had been at nine o'clock for a long time—or at least he guessed it was by the glow in the sky and on the buildings. All winter he had watched the glow getting higher and higher each day and brighter and brighter as the sun approached the end of the street. All winter he had waited for the morning that the sun would rise squarely in the end of the street, but somehow he had missed the day. Perhaps it was that rainy week. Perhaps he was late and in a hurry. Perhaps he just didn't notice. And now the sun was rising behind the buildings to the north of the street, higher and higher each day at nine o'clock, but each day farther and farther to the north of the street.

As soon as he turned from the street into the empty building, he felt strangeness and expectancy. He had been instructed to use the freight elevator, but even so he felt like a conspirator. The freight elevator was bound up in his mind with being late for work and trying to sneak in without being seen and then in the afternoon sneaking out for a quick one just to get over the horrible butt end of the day after the three-thirty deadline.

When he opened the door to the Webster Corporation's fourteenth floor offices, he thought at first that the great news room

was empty, but then he heard the soft clear voices of Jimmy Schuyler, his boss, and Joe Black, the district supervisor; and as he came out of the short end of the L-shaped room, he saw them standing near the files talking to a group of girls. Joe Black looked at his watch when he saw Pegnam, undoubtedly a pure reflex. "Right on the dot," he said.

"That's my boy," Jimmy said.

Pegnam felt ridiculous to be so patted on the head, and some of his joy in the day vanished. They seemed to forget about him, however, and went on explaining the exact procedure to be followed in weeding out the files.

He didn't try to understand what was being said because he was there only for the dirty work. The only thing he had to hear was that he was supposed to make a pile of the old reports at the end of the hall near the freight elevator. He went out to take a look at the place and stayed to smoke a cigarette. He looked up and down the elevator and up and down the stair well and out the window at the fine spring day. He couldn't see the sun itself, but he could see the buildings to the west shining, and even the deep small streets were bright with an indirect light.

By the time he finished the cigarette and got back into the office, the girls had already filled their wastebaskets with discarded material, and the floor was littered with paper. He never did catch up all morning, and the only thing that saved him at all was that every once in a while the girls would remember they were working in the office, and they would pick up their purses and twitch off to the ladies room just as if all the reporters were sitting at their desks to look up after they had passed. Pegnam looked up, of course, and went on snatching reports from the floor.

By noon he was soaked with sweat, for he had literally moved a mountain, and he was ready for a break when Joe Black said, "Let's get cleaned up for lunch, everybody."

Joe Black herded them all into the freight elevator and directly across the street into the bosses' restaurant. He talked over their

heads to the head waiter. "The big table," he said. "The big table for my big family." That was a part Joe Black didn't know how to bring off, but he didn't know it so there was no harm done.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Black," the waiter said. "This way, please." They followed him into a kind of back room with one big table in it. The room was so dim that they could barely see at first, and Pegnam found himself at the foot of the table beside Nancy Hatcher, a reporter from the construction news division.

Nancy was beautiful. He saw her every morning through a glass partition while he was sorting the morning mail, and he couldn't be mistaken about that, but he just didn't believe in beautiful women. When he was a kid he had believed in them. He had looked at magazines and seen movies and told himself, That is what it will be like to be grown up: there will be women like that. (He had also thought there would be money like that and success like that, but those were other stories although they ended up the same way.) After he grew up he looked around for those women for a while and then forgot about them. Of course now he saw them every day on Fifth Avenue and in Rockefeller Plaza and almost everywhere he went, but he didn't believe in them. He didn't believe in Nancy either although he had known from his very first day with the company that she was not only a beautiful woman but a good kid as well, because she kept suggesting things for him to do so it would look as if he were taking hold.

Even knowing she was a good kid, he had never allowed himself to think about her, but now impulsively on this strange day he believed in her, if not as beautiful, at least as a woman.

"Hello, Micky," she said.

"Hello, Nancy," he said. He was going to ask her to call him Mike, but Joe Black was rapping for attention.

"We're all going to have a drink while we study the menu," Joe Black said, and everyone applauded. The waiter began taking orders for drinks.

"When he comes around," Nancy said, "tell him I don't want any."

"Don't let me down, buddy," Pegnam said. He had seen Nancy stop in with the boys for a couple of quick ones after work.

"My mother says I shouldn't drink before four o'clock," she said.

"Where'd she get that?" Pegnam said.

"She read it in a book," Nancy said. "She thinks you shouldn't drink so much either. She worries about you."

"Bless her heart," Pegnam said.

"I tell her everything," Nancy said.

"What's yours?" the waiter said to Pegnam, perhaps because he was wearing a sweater with no shirt.

"Bourbon," Pegnam said. "Water chaser. The lady will have the same."

"My mother won't like this," Nancy said.

"You aren't even going to see it," Pegnam said.

"I mean," Nancy said, "she isn't going to like to hear what a sot you really are."

"Janitors can drink any time," he said. He was already high just on the thought of the drinks and the general excitement that accompanies drinking. Joe Black looked almost pleasant. Jimmy was laughing and joking with the girls, who were gentle now, somehow attractive. And Nancy—well, she was still Nancy. And they were all of them such wonderful people that Pegnam wanted to make a speech before he had had even one drink. The tears were beginning to come to his eyes foolishly.

"Nancy," he said, "what does your mother think of McSorley's?"

"McSorley's?" she said.

"Where I drink my ale. Two-hour lunch hours on working days and noon to midnight on Saturdays."

"Oh," she said. "McSorley's. I'd like to see that place."

"No women," Pegnam said. "They don't allow women."

"Is that why you go there?" Nancy said. Then she reddened. Her eyes opened just a little and her lips parted as if she were about to put her hand over her mouth.

"I just like it there," Pegnam said a little shortly.

"My mother thinks a man should spend a certain amount of time at his club," Nancy said, and Pegnam knew that a girl whose mother was that intelligent must be more than just beautiful. "But she doesn't think a man should overdo it."

"Moderation."

"Moderation in all things, my mother believes, and no drinking before four o'clock."

"I'll see you then," he said. The waiter set her drink in front of her. Pegnam downed it at once. He was ordinarily a leisurely drinker although often in the long run immoderate.

Joe Black stood up and everyone was quiet at once. He said, "For your loyalty and cooperation, to you." He raised his glass. "My big family." He had to do it.

Then Pegnam jumped up. He didn't know why. It wasn't the kind of thing he did. He wasn't really like that. "To you, Joe Black," he said, "and all these beautiful people." He didn't ordinarily make that kind of fool of himself. But at least he tossed off his drink and sat down without suggesting For He's a Jolly Good Fellow. Joe Black waved across the table at him, and Jimmy grinned openly and indeed even foolishly at him.

The waiter was going around taking orders. You would have thought the office girls were all pregnant the way they were ordering the fruit salad bowl that Joe Black ordered. But Pegnam was listening to Jimmy, so Nancy and he had the roast beef special. Good old Jimmy. Good old Nancy.

Just as the waiter was leaving, Jimmy called, "Another round for everybody while we're waiting."

"Make his a double one," Joe Black said, pointing at Pegnam. Pegnam waved at him and he waved at Pegnam.

So all in all Pegnam had five shots on an empty stomach, and

he felt so wonderful that he hated to begin his lunch. But Nancy poked him in the ribs and said, "Eat something before you fall into your plate."

"I feel wonderful," he said.

"Eat up," she said.

"Your mother wouldn't approve, would she?" he said.

"Oh, she always says, Better a happy sinner than a sullen saint."

"Good old mother," he said. "Let's go see her." He started to get out of his chair.

"We've got to work," Nancy said. "Eat your lunch."

"Yeah," he said. "Sure."

"Eat your lunch, Micky," Nancy said, so he began to eat his lunch.

"Feel better now?" Nancy said.

"No," he said. "I felt wonderful."

"You shouldn't drink so much on an empty stomach," Nancy said.

"Does your mother really want to know why I drink so much?" he said.

"She's sincerely interested," Nancy said.

"Let's go see her," he said, but he didn't have the drive to get even half out of the chair.

"Not now," Nancy said.

"You come with me tonight," Pegnam said, "and I'll tell you everything while we eat. Then you can tell your mother."

"Fine," Nancy said. "I'll call my mother and tell her not to expect me." He was still drunk enough so that it all seemed perfectly natural. If he had been sober he would never have asked her.

Even after Joe Black paid the check and they were ready to go back to work, Pegnam still had enough of that good feeling left so that he hated to let it go. "You go on ahead, Nancy," he said. "I'll catch up. I have to get cigarettes."

He got cigarettes and another double shot at the bar. That

really held him right up there, so he moved another mountain and sweated another gallon without being particularly aware what he was doing.

At about three o'clock he went down for another drink because he didn't want to lose that fine casual feeling he would have to have to ask Nancy to slip out for a quick one at four o'clock. But as it turned out he could have been cold sober. He was rushing around to get a little ahead so he wouldn't be missed when he saw her ringing the buzzer by the freight elevator. She held up four fingers and he heaved his trash box at the pile and went with her.

"Your mother would be proud of your self-control," he said.

"No," she said, a little sadly it seemed, "she expects it." They had one and then a cigarette and then another one and went back with the comfortable knowledge that they could last until five.

And last they did, very handsomely, but five minutes past five found them back again at the same spot. Nancy was paying for her own, and it was just as well, because Pegnam never carried too much money on him.

Almost the first thing they did was decide to go to Chinatown for dinner, but it took them a long time to get started. Nancy had to call her mother and one thing and another. They ate potato chips and boiled eggs and pickled pigs feet and herring and the sort of stuff you can find in bars to hold you just a little longer.

"Tell me, Micky," Nancy said. She showed no signs of being ready to go to Chinatown or anywhere else. "There's something I'd like to know."

"What's that?" he said.

"What do you do when you ride me home on the subway and then stay on after I get off?"

"You really want to know?"

"When I called my mother this is one of the things she particularly asked me to find out for her."

"Bless her heart," Pegnam said. "Well, I tell you. I just ride to

the end of the line and get off and walk around. Then I find a place to eat and have a couple of beers. One Friday night I was in a diner with some truck drivers and they gave me a ride to Manchester, New Hampshire, and back the next night. Some nights I ride over to Jersey or Brooklyn with some of the other guys. I've seen a lot like that. Two nights a week I go right home after work and write letters."

"And on Saturday you go to McSorley's, right?"

"As soon as I get up. I usually get there between eleven and eleven-thirty for a big corned beef and cabbage feed, and I stay until they close up at midnight."

"I'd sure like to see that place," she said.

"No women allowed," he said.

"I know," she said. "I guess that covers it."

"I guess it does," he said. "How about you?"

"We've got to decide what to do after we finish here. I don't really feel much like eating."

"Me neither," he said, "and it's just as well because we don't have much money. We could do something cheap like go to Coney and walk on the beach."

"Not tonight," Nancy said. "Some other time but not tonight. How about the Staten Island Ferry?"

"Is that good?"

"It's one of New York's most famous cheap dates," she said.

"Sounds OK to me," he said.

"First, we have to get to the Battery," she said, pushing back her chair and starting to get up.

"Wait till I look at my map," he said. "The Battery isn't in my territory." She settled back and he took out his city map—he never took a step without it. "From where we are," he said, "it looks easy."

"It is easy," she said. "Let's go."

But if the Battery wasn't in his territory, Staten Island wasn't even on his map. At the bottom of the map was only a dotted line

that ran right off the edge. Printed beside this line was the legend: To Staten Island.

As they stood at the rail waiting for the voyage to start, he said, "It's wonderful already." In his mind's eye he saw the ferry boat plunging off the edge of the map. Then the boat began to move and they were indeed cut off from the land.

"There's nothing like a sea voyage," Nancy said.

"Nothing," he said. "Smell the salt spray."

He inhaled deeply and flung his arms out wide. In dropping his arms he let one of them fall, as if by accident, on Nancy's shoulders. She wasn't in the least deceived and leaned against him. "It's about time," she said.

For some time after that they said nothing but remained in the classic grouping at the boat's rail, their backs to the land and even to the boat, their faces looking, not at horizons, but down at the water sliding directly beneath them. It would have been nice if there had been the arched backs of porpoises and phosphorous, reflections of stars and hammered moon path, but there was only the black water sliding hypnotically below, carrying unidentifiable objects into their narrow range of vision and swiftly out again.

Nancy turned her face against his shoulder. "The water almost put me to sleep," she said.

"Me too," he said. He looked down at the top of her head. He had long forgotten that she was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. It was dark. She was in his arms. He felt strong, gigantic even, protective, yet on the verge of tears.

"We should be looking for the Statue of Liberty," she said without moving.

"Hush," he said. "I'm too comfortable." That was an outright lie. His feet were killing him, and he was getting a stitch in his side from maintaining his position, but he had no intention of giving her an occasion to move away.

"Yes," she said. This time she straightened and took her arm

away from around his waist. "Yes, we must. We must always say goodbye to the old lady on the outward voyage."

"We really must," he managed to say although he actually wasn't at all happy about this turn of events. The pain in his side and having lost his grip on her did nothing for his disposition. He would much rather have sulked, but fortunately it was so dark that his sulky attempts at dissembling succeeded.

When they raised their eyes and looked outward, they couldn't very well miss the Statue. "Goodbye," Nancy called, waving to the Statue.

"Goodbye," Pegnam shouted. Nancy began to wave her handkerchief and dab at her eyes. Pegnam shredded a couple of Kleenex and let the pieces float over the side. Then he tore up a cigarette package and threw the pieces into the air. He held the last few cigarettes in his hand.

Near them somewhere a great whistle cut loose with a blast that shook the whole boat. They looked at each other. He could see her laughing but couldn't hear her. He was laughing too. She made a little gesture with both hands and he jumped at her. She met him—at least—and they kissed very hard. The hand that was holding the cigarettes freed itself behind her back simply by opening and letting the cigarettes fall into the water.

At that moment, however, another couple came toward them. Nancy saw them over his shoulder. At first he was glad she saw them, and then he was a little resentful that she should have seen anything just then. She drew away a trifle—just the trifle that made the difference between passion and romance.

"What's all the shouting?" the girl said as the couple came up.

"We were just saying goodbye to the Statue of Liberty," Nancy said.

The boy and the girl turned toward the Statue, which was by then almost out of sight. "Goodbye, goodbye," the boy said.

"Goodbye, aloha," the girl whispered.

"Aloha, aloha," the boy whispered. He drew himself up as if

he were about to sing an aloha song the way they do in the movies, but he only kissed the girl, and for the rest of the crossing they stood there hung at the lips, eyes closed, oblivious. Nancy and Pegnam could have acted as if there was no one there at all, but for some inscrutable reason they chose to hold tight to each other and whisper together making fun of the other two. When they tiptoed away and got off at Staten Island, the boy and the girl were still standing there.

Once they had landed, Pegnam discovered that Nancy had no more idea than he did where they were. She had never before got off the ferry but had always ridden directly back across. All around them people were running toward busses lined up in the terminal. "What shall we do now?" he said.

"I don't know," Nancy said. She drooped a little against him.

"Well, let's go," he said and pulled her arm until she was running along with him. He passed up the first two busses because they were almost empty and jammed her ahead of him into the third bus. "All these people have to be going somewhere," he said into her ear. He had one arm around her to hold her up because there was no grip for her anywhere. She just stood there with her arms down and her head against his chest. He would have been completely embarrassed except that he hadn't—and he didn't think anyone else in the bus had—ever seen such a pretty girl acting like that in public.

Now it was his turn to keep his eyes open, for she seemed scarcely aware where they were. "Are you all right?" he whispered.

"Are we in heaven yet?" she said. He flushed, for she said it quite distinctly and several people near them smiled.

Fortunately his rash guess about the crowded bus paid off when several people got off at a kind of square where in one quick glance he could see a diner and a drug store still open. He helped her off the bus, and when they were alone he shook her gently and said, "Are you all right?"

"Yes, Micky," she said. "I'm floating."

"Call me Mike," he said.

"Yes, Mike. I'm floating."

"OK," he said. "Let's get something to eat."

"We don't have enough money," she said, which was a strange thing for an enchanted girl to say.

"Lots of money," he said because he had a reserve fund in the bottom of his billfold, a ten-dollar bill that was so much an emergency reserve that he had once walked from 7th Street to 92nd Street rather than break into it. He hadn't really lied to her before when he told her he didn't have any money. He just never thought of that ten-dollar bill as money, but now he took it out and showed it to her.

"Let's eat then," Nancy said. He led her into the diner because she was still not exactly all there. Then she said, "But we ate just a little while ago."

"That was on the other side of the water," he said, "and besides it wasn't really a meal. Do you know what you want?"

"Yes, Mike," she said, but she didn't say any more about it.

"Give us two of your special ham and eggs," he said. "Hash brown potatoes, toast, and coffee."

"So much?" she said.

"This is the best time to eat," he said. "If you can't sleep, you got to eat." So they ate.

He swabbed the last of his toast over his plate and ordered more coffee. "Now, Nancy," he said, "what are your plans for the evening?"

"I don't know, Mike," she said. Her plate was as clean as his.

"Will your mother be worrying?"

"When I talked with her on the phone, she said she was going to take seconal. She hasn't been sleeping well lately."

"I'm sorry," he said.

"She'll be out now until noon," Nancy said.

"Then we can do as we please," he said.

"Yes," she said.

"Well, then," he said between sips of the hot coffee, "let's see about finding a place to stay."

Discreet inquiry at the diner and the drug store uncovered a rooming house in the next block. And most discreet rapping at the door resulted in the porch light's being turned on and the door's being opened on the chain. "Could we have a room for the night?" Pegnam said into the opening of the door. "We're exhausted from sightseeing and can't make our way back to our hotel or the place we parked our car." He put that last in so that his accent would suggest that he was a traveller from Boston or—if the person behind the door was naive enough—from England. At all events no one could mistake him for a native of the place.

A streak of old face with no teeth and white hair in curlers appeared in the opening of the door. "Step back both of you so I can get a good look." They stepped down two steps and stood still. The door opened and the old lady said, "Come in, come in. It's my business to know good people when I see them even if it is late and they are tired. Come in, come in. I have a bed all turned down for you."

She led them up the stairs to a large room with a connecting bath. "This used to be our room," she said, "but I don't need such a large room any more or such a large bed." She pressed lightly on the bed to show the softness of the mattress. The whole bed shook gently but didn't creak or rattle.

"We are very sorry to have disturbed you," Pegnam said.

"It's quite all right," the old lady said. "Sleep well." She left quietly.

When they at last woke up in the morning and thought about getting home, they had little to say to each other. After paying for the room, they had, deducting the bus, ferry, and subway fares, just enough for two cups of coffee and one doughnut. That was nowhere near enough, for Pegnam was ravenously hungry. As a result of his hunger he was disagreeable—or would have been

if he had had to say anything—but the normal sadness of such a morning made it easy to avoid talking, although he meticulously put his arm around Nancy on the ferry and even gave her a little squeeze as they passed the Statue of Liberty.

"Hello, Statue of Liberty," she said. "We're back."

"Hello," he said. But they didn't wave or shout, and no one came out to salute the Statue.

"Do you have money at home for your breakfast, Micky?" Nancy said without removing her head from his shoulder.

"Yes," he said.

"Well, why don't you come home with me for breakfast anyway?"

"I don't want to meet your mother like this," he said. "You're going to have trouble enough."

"It's all right," Nancy said. "I live alone. I don't have any mother."

"But—"

"It's all a game," Nancy said.

So they went to her house for breakfast. Then they lay down for a nap and decided to get married. In the long run nothing came of it, but that was what they decided that day.

POET SIGNATURE

Robert Hutchinson

CONTEMPORARY POETRY seems to me to be gathering toward a direction, and Robert Hutchinson suggests a shape and promise of that direction. After the black bier of age has passed, "out of the street childhood/ Came thumbing its bell, pedalling downhill with no hands." In the end is the beginning. The strain runs in most of Mr. Hutchinson's poems. Where it is not overt, it is implicit. There is freshness and vitality in this turning to roots, to childhood evocations. As Mr. Hutchinson's work indicates, it is not the prompting of a sad nostalgia, but the tapping of a resource that freshens perception and image, offers an inalienable point of vantage and a strength of its own kind. It keeps the ruthlessness as well as the freshness of its taproot. "After the Witch's Cave" reminds us, through the contour of legend, that "You have released your snow-white birds, but they/ Do not release you, Gretel,/ Do not release you."

Mr. Hutchinson sometimes moves away from this preoccupation, but one feels that he will veer back toward it, in one guise or another, as his central point of reference. It is the same freshening impulse that moves in "The Guardians": "Pray a cleansing god/ Will brighten the sleep of all laundry women,/ Renew the souls that scrub, sweepers/ Of all variety." Even in "The Surviving" it is upon renewal, upon fresh beginnings, that the focus falls at last: "And of our sons, let it be said/ The mountains, too, endure,/ And many shall find their home there, and many shall be fed."

This is the shaping spirit of the poems. But poems, of course, are not accomplished by high intention or vigorous conception. It has become almost axiomatic that the publishing poet must be a canny craftsman, at least as well schooled in his stringent discipline as is the critic in his. The prosody of "To a Girl Making Up the Fifth Grade" suggests the diligence Mr. Hutchinson brings to his trade; he knows his tools. He has not explored the limits of their possibilities, but he is sensitive to them. His imagery is highly selective, his structural metaphor is disciplined to a fine balance of its components. He works in a subdued vein, a limited orbit prosodically, but this, like chamber music, offers its own satisfactions.—*J.D.H.*

FROM THE DOORWAY

After the hard drive, and the parkway heavy,
I paused in the door too white for my dark age—
Like one not used to light, stood not quite ready
For joy: a boy in love, a king at the edge
Of an epiphany.

And what was there to see
But glasses in a row, the tiny fires
Caught from the lamps, the cat in the chair, the slow
Dance of your hands around a flame of flowers?
A house of only silence, a life ago,

Like roaming the Christmas kitchen, or that brief dream
That something in the moment's clear design
Of doorway, flowers, and room
Had seemed almost to say that they were mine
Before you smiled to make me feel at home.

SONG

Once in a wanton weather
And weary with oldergrow
I dipped the unbruised water
Of five first years, to
Find the one gold starfish
That my own children know.

I found the starfish reading
A story of a man
Who once in a wanton weather
Wished on a starfish when
A single bruise of childhood
Would chase him old again.

AT THE INTERSECTION

Only five cars red, and the black: somebody old,
But age was not why the street stood bared.
The way the six cars rolled
Did that, making it seem the living cared
For somebody none of us knew. But I
Had not come out to stand while old men die:
The day was half away, and its demands
Were not the less for six slow cars
And piety, and I with July and thirty more years
To meet. The light directed, I touched
The reverend arm, and out of the street childhood
Came thumbing its bell, pedalling downhill with no hands.

THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

It is fresh each morning, wall by wall,
Delivered as the sun turns, iced with spells,
And, where the door was, layers fill
Flung like a snow to feast our eyes,
A wood to frost an angel dumb.
Past cherries, candied limes, white plum,
Into the fumy chocolate air,
We move our raisin eyes, round mouths,
Fingers turned on us by that glaze,
To riddle impenetrable mysteries there:
For there was an entrance, but no door,
We were the bread we were grateful for,
Who, fresh each morning, wall by wall,
Entered the intuitive weather whole
To wither and break there, flake there while
Those thin as a wafer came out raised,
Their eyes moist, black as a carpenter's nail.
Their grape lips froze, though once I heard
These walls would crumble at a word.
But no one could riddle me that folk-tale.

TO A GIRL MAKING UP THE FIFTH GRADE

There will be September, a time then for healing;
The heads correct their inclinations now:
Across the desks the summer flow of intellect
Dries and fails; we leave our favorite questions
In the echo of a fact
And wrap you here in a drowsy August's drilling.

And there, on the outside, summer drips away, rolling
Toward sleep and snow. It sniffs at the papers,
Leaning in, all purr and waggle, warm
With the leaves of its mad romp, improper
And not true. And I should call it that, a form
Unsealed by an unschooled century's fall-feeling,

But there will be May, and time for time's own telling.
You will find bird-claw, skull, a fetid way
And where you hunger out, will hunger in
Long after I have told you, as though true, of river-play,
Real camps that are forever summer
With no day falling, leaf lost, or fountain failing.

AFTER THE WITCH'S CAVE

Once, Gretel, we were not ashamed.
For a time you cried in your sleep, and words
Would move between us like restless stars.
We went back to the forest where the snow-white bird
Shook circularities down: when the moon rose
"What will become of us?" you remembered,
And the two of us only.

The two of us, Gretel, on the seeded orbit back
Through the black air and our mother's hate
(The moon hungry, the candied sunlight false)
To the hour of waking, screams from the ovens, and the red eyes.
And what we had to do there – a lonely
Expedience, as we knew.

We knew then, Gretel, more
Than the jewels in your hair
The nights of dancing and the price of lamb
And moon-rise neither song nor terror.

Sometimes
I wake sometimes to the echo of blackening trees
And walk where the white bird sleeps.
You have released your snow-white birds, but they
Do not release you, Gretel,
Do not release you.

THE SURVIVING

Those who endured the mountain were fed by the mountain.
Into a place they had forgotten
They moved past rows of stopped eyes.
The air spoke. A man said O my God, and the children cried.

Then sickness with the strange food, questions, the stare
That answered for those who had not endured;
And the valley years that meant nothing,
And being pointed at like one who has said a strange thing.

Of these, survived by those whom we survive,
And of our sons, let it be said
The mountains, too, endure,
And many shall find their home there, and many shall be fed.

CHAMBER MUSIC

Young, in my kitchen years,
I would hunch by the stove's noise
By mother cook and dog
And listen to the stove's voice
Excite my multiple name;
Then dried by overhead fires
I would curl like the cook's bad ear
Toward my mother, about to speak,
Toward the dog, about to hear,
And open to the stove's flame;

Till red in the red doorway
One day my image stood
So silent with blood I cried
Cries to some household god
To stop the world's wound,
And my mother could make no sound,
The cook was deaf as a tree,
The dog went underground,
And the only god that sang
Sang in his own key.

THE GUARDIANS

At night, in the unpaid city,
Along the unprofitable streets
Where small shops close their doorways

And cats stretch in their idle dreams,
The earth, air-borne and particled,
Moves in, covers,
Invades the courthouse steps,
Slides on the ledger-page, scatters,
And settles down.
And it is then,
At night, in the idle city,
I lie like some Roman guard
Awake from the wind of a dry Eastern stream
And, mindful of the earth's advances,
Pray a cleansing god
Will brighten the sleep of all laundry women,
Renew the souls that scrub, sweepers
Of all variety,
And hold from dreams of falling
Those who their high days long
Hang like a loose button, that we
May see from the idle city
Fresh towers on the busy earth.

George Brandon Saul

WHAT CAME OF AN ARGUMENT

1

It was broad sunrise of a spring morning in that kingdom of Ireland known as Connacht, perhaps twenty centuries or more ago: one forgets. Blackbirds were talking and the good smell of turned earth was drifting into the bedroom of the royal palace at Cruachan. King Oilioll, a respectable—but not overly prepossessing—figure of a man, awoke with a great yawn. Watching him, his wife Medb had an impulse to stop it before the royal countenance was split from ear to ear. As the queen was never a woman to thwart an impulse, she reached over from her side of the bed and jabbed Oilioll in the ribs, snorting "What a mouth!"

"Eh, woman?" growled the king, his choked yawn needling his normally equable disposition. "Handsome is as handsome does. And you've got to admit I've done handsomely by you, my girl, whatever the size of my mouth!"

"I haven't been complaining, have I?—But why boast about what you've 'done' for me?"

"Why not?—You've just admitted you've got no complaints, and you should realize that you're wealthier as a result of marrying me than you ever were before."

"Is that so, now!" snorted Medb, bridling. And raising herself on one elbow she added: "I had as much before marriage as I have now. Not that I *mightn't* have had more if I'd taken one of my other suitors rather than you!"

"Ha, woman!—You're a modest creature!" suggested her husband sarcastically.

"I am not, then, and I don't wish to be!" flared Medb. "But you needn't pretend that I didn't have the pick of Erin before I chose you. After all, I was the best-looking of the High King's six daughters; I was the most generous; I was the wealthiest; and I was the ablest in battle and personal combat. It is natural that men should have always been attracted to me! I have never been outtired in love-play; so every lover's pride has plagued him to renewed trial! I can melt a deeper hole in the snow than any other queen! And you know perfectly well that I turned down proposals from three kings before I accepted you as husband!"

"How ever did you bring yourself to accept me," grated Oilioll sarcastically, "considering your capacities and the fact that the very cream of Erin was offering itself to be poured into your cup?"

"I'll tell you, since you ask," snapped Medb, with a certain glint in her eyes. "I made up my mind as a girl that I would ask no bride-gift of whomever I should marry except certain qualities in the man himself; and those qualities were three: lack of jealousy, lack of fear, and lack of churlishness. For I myself am not jealous, and one man has followed another with me ever since I can remember, though a vigorous husband is always a convenience; I am personally fearless—and have proved it time and again on the battlefield; and I have always been openhanded and free in gift-giving. A man unable to match me in each of these respects would cut a pitiable figure beside me; and you were the only suitor of appropriate rank able to give me this triple bride-gift. I did not marry you to increase my possessions; I was as wealthy as you when I took you—and I still am!"

"Indeed, my girl!" sneered Oilioll haughtily. "Let me tell you I am the wealthiest person in all Erin!"

"Don't 'my girl' me!" raged Medb. "Prove your claim!"

In a remarkably short time the royal couple were seated on the lawn before the palace in their chairs of carven yew inlaid with red gold and precious stones. Then, at a signal from Oilioll, following a nod from Medb, servants began piling before each his personal possessions. Household utensils were placed side by side with thumb-rings and other jewelry; with garments in the seven colors traditionally allowed Irish royalty; with bronze-riveted, ash-handled spears and other instruments of battle. After these had been carefully counted and the totals recorded, the horses, sheep, swine, and cattle were driven in from pasture and woodland and similarly noted as to number, kind, and ownership.

In the end, Oilioll emerged one bull richer than Medb, though indeed only because that bull—a great fellow known as *Finnbennach,* or "The White-Horned"—had chosen to leave Medb's herds for the king's, counting ownership by a woman beneath his dignity. Medb was furious in her disappointment. Having called a messenger, she ordered him to find out whether the "White Horned" could be matched by any bull in Erin. The messenger promptly replied that he knew of an even better animal—the Dun, or Brown, Bull of Cooley, owned by the Ulsterman Dare Mac Fiachna.

The queen was imperative. "Go at once," she cried, "and ask to borrow the Dun for a year. And tell Dare that if he accedes, he shall not only have the Dun returned to him after the breeding, but be sent a bounty of fifty heifers in addition. And tell him that if his countrymen oppose the loan, he himself shall come

with the bull to Connacht, where he will be given an estate equal in size to that he possesses in Ulster, a chariot worthy of a king, and my own most intimate favors!"

So an embassy to Dare was organized.

It was well received and the loan of the bull was granted. But alas for too lavish entertainment! Several members of the embassy got drunk on Dare's generous hospitality and foolishly began boasting that the bull would have gone to Connacht whether or not Dare had agreed! So Dare, in the anger of an injured host, sent the embassy packing.

"You can whistle for the bull so far as I am concerned!" said he.

Medb received the news of Dare's rejection with outward calm. But those who knew her best realized that it was at such times that she was most dangerous. In the present instance, she merely announced that the bull would be taken, assembled her armies, called in allies from Leinster and Munster, and headed for Ulster.

And that was the beginning of the great "Cattle-Raid of Cooley" recorded in legend, the war in which only the valor of the hero Cuchulainn saved the northern kingdom under attack.

2

Of the progress of Medb's invasion it is not my purpose to tell, since doing so would involve a long account of the history of Cuchulainn himself, which only an epic poet should undertake. Besides, I have forgotten some of the details. Enough to say that after months of bloody conflict Medb, though eventually driven back into Connacht with her defeated forces, managed to abduct

the Dun Bull and drive him to Cruachan. And that was no man's gain.

Why?

Not hard to tell the reason!

As soon as the Dun Bull felt the pastures of Connacht under his hooves, he stopped in his tracks and bellowed three great challenges across the countryside before him. And the "White-Horned" bull of King Oilioll heard and accepted the challenges, bellowing with equal loudness in return. Before long he had torn raging from the enclosures of Cruachan and was snorting defiance furiously into the face of the Dun.

For a few moments these monstrous animals stood looking at each other while memory poured hatred and poison into their blood; for in truth these were no ordinary bulls, but ancient enemies who for centuries had been fighting each other in one body-shape or another—as ravens, as sea-monsters, and so on—since contention first broke out between them when they were swineherds to certain gods. This was a circumstance unknown to Medb or anyone else, but it was the real reason for what followed. And that is a story briefly told.

After frothing silently at each other for a short time, the two bulls began pawing the ground in preparation for their duel—and it was not long before the doors of all Connacht were being closed against the rain of flying clods veiling the sun. Then, with bellows that shook the nuts from hazel trees, the great antagonists rushed head-on at each other. The skull-crashing shock of that meeting was like the splitting of thunder over the countryside. It gave momentary pause to the contestants; then they tangled

horns and strained and roared until the people of Connacht must have thought the universe was in agony with their earth-shaking contention. All that day they struggled and fought, and by nightfall neither had been conquered.

They had unlocked horns and were breathing heavily in a brief respite from fighting, their eyes bright with murderous hatred still, when an Ulsterman serving in Queen Medb's host cast a mocking word at the Dun of Cooley to prick him to greater effort.

The taunt worked. Stung by the insult, the Dun rushed at his opponent with renewed passion; and that was the last the people of Connacht saw of the bulls until the next day. Not that the animals remained unheard, for their plunging and bellowing shook all Erin from dusk to dawn.

At daybreak the Dun of Cooley came ploughing portentuously over the western edge of Cruachan, great portions of his late opponent decorating his horns. With three bellows he crashed out of Connacht en route to his home in Ulster, stopping only once or twice to satisfy his thirst by exposing a river-bed. And those unfortunates who happened to get into his path never impeded any later traveller.

Arrived in his homeland, the Dun rose on his hind legs, leaned back monstrously against a hill, and pealed his bellowing triumph to all Ulster. But his exultation burst his heart, and the death-stream poured from his mouth.

3

In Cruachan Oilioll was grumbling to his wife.

"A stupid, bloody, wasteful affair if ever there was one!—and all because of your bullheadedness!"

Medb smiled placidly.

"At least we are now equal in wealth," she observed.

Elizabeth Sparhawk-Jones

NOTES ON THE PAINTINGS

ALTHOUGH MODERN in spirit, Sparhawk-Jones is one of those artists who continues the tradition of previous centuries. Many of her paintings are frankly and recognizably pictures of people, and of the way people feel about themselves and their situation. Other examples of her work are pictures of ideas poetically viewed, such as romantic love, or injustice. All of her paintings may be described as icons of personality, highly stylized and symbolic images. Icons encourage iconography, the study of the forms of representation. Although a painting by Sparhawk-Jones can be appreciated as an abstract, esthetic image apart from its literary meaning, the subject represented is as important, if not more important, than the composition and color in determining the total impression the painting gives.

The purpose of the notes that follow is to suggest (without attempting to be definitive or fanciful), meanings inherent in a few of these paintings, and to indicate their originality and consistency.

A painting of a legend or a myth will serve as a good introduction. If the myth is a familiar one, the way the artist treats it reveals his mentality, his interests.

Paintings of Lady Godiva, who rode naked on horseback through a town, usually show her seated with great aplomb and modesty, her body hidden by her long tresses. The popular conception romanticises. Any indication that a medieval lady, the mistress of a manor, might suffer physical discomfort and mental

embarrassment, becomes lost in the nimbus of sentiment. In fact, from the popular conception it is difficult to remember that Lady Godiva was a real person and had a reason for riding through town without her clothes. (Her husband bet her she wouldn't, and agreed to reduce oppressive taxes on his tenants if she would.) The whys and wherefores tend to become obscured by the sensationalism of the act itself.

The Sparhawk-Jones painting of Lady Godiva shows her climbing up on the horse to commence the ride. By the simple device of presenting Lady Godiva not in her moment of glory when she was onstage, so to speak, but in the wings in the act of getting ready, the painter has concentrated our attention on the fact that Lady Godiva was a human being who underwent something of an ordeal. Even admitting the possibility that she may have enjoyed the thrill of the ride (though nobody is supposed to have looked), her deed was daring. And the painting by Sparhawk-Jones catches the excitement of the act.

Reinforcing the humorous realism, the horse in the painting is depicted as a rather gaunt, hard-working nag who could be depended on to behave sedately, and not, as popularly conceived, a glamorous charger with a tufted tail. The painting imparts a sense of personal predicament to a scene that is usually rendered as romantic generalization.

The style of the rendition is flamboyant and delicate. While the colors are appropriately somber for the occasion (convention flaunted, medieval chivalry brought to a breaking point), the brush strokes are, by contrast, bold, appropriate to the vigorous figure of Lady Godiva and to the impetuous movement of her body.

The presentation of a revealing moment of personal drama is a characteristic of the paintings of Sparhawk-Jones. In a watercolor entitled "Between Several" the subject is a lady drying herself after a bath. This subject has been a favorite of painters from the age of the Greeks to the time of the French impressionists.

Usually the lady is unselfconsciously and unashamedly enjoying a luxurious sense of physical well-being. The woman in the Sparhawk-Jones painting, on the contrary, is shown covering her body with a towel as if to escape from the view of prying eyes. The towel is wrapped around her head too, and hides her face. Her body is strong and capable, if awkward, and her skin is red and fresh, hardy, instead of sensual. This is a woman dedicated to housework rather than affection. The flesh tones are rich with watercolor hues, and the outlines are strongly sketched.

The usually pleasant and innocuous subject of woman after the bath is here given an acutely realistic treatment. The realism of the subject, however, as in the painting of Lady Godiva, is respected by the painter to such a degree that the treatment is invested with a romanticism of its own. The mingled and conflicting emotions of the woman and the intense homeliness of her position lend her character and dignity.

In both the painting of Lady Godiva and the painting of the lady after the bath, outward appearances are used to express inner emotions, but are not visibly transformed by emotion. However, in another, more expressionistic, style of painting by Sparhawk-Jones, the emotion expressed does transform actuality, so that the scene becomes transcendental.

A large, wide and brightly colored painting entitled "On an Enchanted Shore" is an example. Though we recognize the scene, the objects in it are distorted to emphasize meaning.

The painting has the cryptic quality of a charade. In the center and foreground, a woman wearing a bathing suit appears to emerge from one of several large, twisted sea shells that stand about the beach. Beyond is a rough shaped sea, and slashes of sky.

The woman has a simplified, clown-like face, delicate in coloring. Her skin has a blush as impersonal as the color of the sky. She is on all fours, her head hanging down; she looks out of the painting and sees the world upside down.

The conch shells are patently grotesque, and their tremendous size emphasizes their strangeness. They are works of nature, but their convoluted hardness and vivid coloration seem to indicate a mysterious and ponderously whimsical aspect of nature. They stand around on the beach in relation to the woman like an arrangement of still life of which she is the centerpiece. Motionless, she is as much a part of the landscape as the conch shells, no more, no less. Having the breadth of land, sea and sky, the meeting place of contrasting elements, a beach scene lends itself well to a sense of heightened reality, or unreality. In this painting, the air of spaciousness is used to convey a sense of psychic distance. Human beings and sea shells are both productions of nature, and both are enchanted.

The forms in this painting tend to be abstract, and abstracted, though recognizable. The brush strokes are bold, and each stroke is made to tell, to add to the shapes, so that the composition is built with considerable economy.

"On An Enchanted Shore" invents its symbolism, creates a mood. Although any reference to traditional subject matter is not essential, it is possible by a stretch of the imagination to see this painting as a 20th-century version of the "Birth of Venus."

If the woman in the painting is seen as Venus, she is born out of a sea shell, but no gentle zephyrs blow her in, and nobody is on the beach to welcome her. She has landed like a castaway. The beach is littered with old abandoned sea shells perhaps belonging to Venuses who arrived earlier than she. Yet the day is nice, the light is beautiful, and the shore is enchanted. She is glad to be there. A gaiety persists through the loneliness of the scene.

The point to be made about this picture, however, is that it is unnecessary to stretch the imagination—the lady does not have to be Venus, or to have a name—for the meaning and the mood to be understood.

In all the paintings of Sparhawk-Jones the central figures are anonymous spectators as well as personal participants in their

own actions and emotions, and are often shown observing their own fate while engaged in fulfilling it. This, incidentally, might serve as a definition of the role the artist plays. The people in these paintings often have the sensitivity and consciousness attributed to artists.

The subject matter of painting and literature is frequently similar in historic epochs of art. In the United States, to give one example, the paintings of Winslow Homer have important qualities in common with the writings of Stephen Crane.

The art of Sparhawk-Jones is imbued with a frontier independence, which may account for the ability to place the self personally in the situation of the myths she depicts (as Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee is placed in King Arthur's court).

Paintings of a more somber mood, such as the woman after the bath, remind one of the brooding and dogged directness of the writing of Theodore Dreiser, his evocation of the personal and poetic reality underneath garish respectability. Or perhaps the painting is even closer to the character of Sherwood Anderson's description of complex desire behind the crude facades of conformism.

A work such as "On An Enchanted Shore" has as its subject vague, subtle, but powerfully determinant forces of character and fate such as preoccupied Edith Wharton.

These allusions are misleading, however, insofar as the paintings are original rather than derivative, and at their best defy comparison. Though they are spiritually akin to the painting of Albert Pinkham Ryder and William Morris Hunt, they beat a path of their own in the 20th century.

One might go so far as to say that the enchantment in these paintings is an enchantment of experience rather than innocence—an experience that is candidly human. The world of the human (in contrast to the non-human or the inhumane), has only begun to be rediscovered and explored by contemporary American painting. —*Leslie Katz*

REFRESHMENT.

FACES ON THE DARK. *Private collection, Frank Rehn Gallery.*

WOMAN WITH THE MOON IN HER APRON.

BETWEEN SEVERAL.

ON AN ENCHANTED SHORE.

GODIVA. *Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery.*

Lorraine Nauss Calhoun

THE ANNUAL PICNIC

THE MEN brought up the tables that were scattered through the park and formed them in a T. Only Rev. Foote and Mr. Partridge stood there without working: Rev. Foote because he was the minister (though the Baptists said their preacher always Entered In on everything), and Mr. Partridge being much too fat to carry anything except himself. Especially since he wasn't hearty-fat like Mr. Beeker. All Mr. Partridge ever did was criticize. Already he was saying, pointing with his stubby finger to the space between the tabletops and benches, Don't see how I'll ever fit in that contraption.

Mildred tried to catch his eye and look some feeling into it for Mrs. Partridge, who was standing with her yellow tablecloth all billowing—set to fly up to reserve the endmost table so he could sit sideways just the way he always managed every year. Mildred almost wished he were a relative or something, much as she disliked to think of having such a fat thing close to her in any way. (Poor Mrs. Partridge—that was why she was so thin: had to draw herself into her bones to keep a little space between them in the bed.) If he were only just a very distant cousin, she could go and nudge him not to spoil it all. The ladies wanted so to have their families really in on this, the only time (except the Christmas program) that the whole church got together.

Mildred still remembered how she spoiled last year's picnic by just telling Mother that she didn't want to go. Mother really was upset. Why Mildred, she kept saying, what's the matter with you? why we've got the food all packed. Of course it ended with her going just the same as always; but it absolutely ruined the day. Even though she acted all excited at the baseball game and cheered whenever Daddy came to bat, she couldn't prove that she was having a good time. So Mother kept on sending out a kind of

pieced-out smile or putting out a patting hand; and then that night she came into the bedroom and said she hoped they always would be friends and confidantes although the years ahead would not be easy ones for Mildred.

Mother never really was the same again—always sort of watching out that Mildred should be liking this or that, always asking was it fun, did you enjoy it darling. You could see that picnics were important.

But she couldn't get a message out to Mr. Partridge. Even when he seemed to look at her, he went right on about how every year they had to spoil his Sunday Dinner with their blamefool picnic notions. There was nothing she could do but look around and take her turn at pity with the other ladies who were clucking out their sympathy with Mrs. Partridge as they stood there with their tablecloths and Sunday papers, and their silverware all marked with colored strings for easy sorting later in the day. Mother made a little patting Never Mind upon her shoulder, and nodded bright-eyed to confirm the murmurs Mrs. Gross and Mrs. Lederle were making about how grown-up Mildred was, and at her age. Why really. You can't imagine what a Help she is, said Mother. You never have to stand there telling her what next. She just takes over. Why she made the whole potato salad for today. Completely. I knew I wouldn't even have to taste for seasoning. In fact I really don't know what she put in it; she has her flavor secrets like the rest of us.

Mildred stepped back from their premature expressions of delight, and decided that if afterwards someone should comment on the salad she would say I *do* think that a little *boiled* dressing added to the mayonnaise. . . .

But now the men had finished. Now the women rustled forward with the Sunday Supplements and tablecloths unfurled. The men retreated, laughing, to the horse-shoe grounds or to the portable that Warren Huesing brought to hear the double-header that the Cubs were playing. Some stood in little groups to talk of

Drought or Democrats—as Daddy said. Of course today they might discuss the Chinese Communists that Rev. Bundeman, the missionary, told about in church this morning. The men had time to talk about such things; the ladies had the dinner to prepare.

They were unwrapping all their specialties, and calling to each other all the things they brought and what they first had thought of bringing; crying out that there another tablecloth was flying at the corner, didn't someone have a pickle jar or casserole to weight it down; and all exclaiming suddenly that Mrs. Beeker's good white linen had a stain already (from the bottom of a baked dish), how she ever had the nerve to risk it at a picnic they would never know. I even brought a paper tablecloth, said Mother.

Mildred hoped the ladies wouldn't think that this was advertising. Daddy had just stocked the middle counter of their drug store with a lot of paper household goods. Luckily the Oberlins and all their relatives were Baptist; so they weren't here to take offence. Of course it was their own fault that they kept their drug store just the way it always was, dark and doctor-smelly, with its name of Pharmacy just printed there, not neon-lighted like their WATSON DRUGS. Still it might have been embarrassing if Mother had talked paper tablecloth in front of Mrs. Oberlin. As it was, nobody noticed. Mrs. Gross was bringing out her fresh peach pies; and so there was a grand commotion, everybody asking to reserve a little piece.

Mildred was the only daughter helping, except for Betty Fowler. (If you could rightly say that Betty was a daughter, now that she was almost thirty.) She was sitting with the baby buggies, and keeping tabs on Junior Dekhart and the Bentley twins who were crawling out in all directions from the twisted oak. Betty always watched the children; she also knit a pair of booties every time a baby was baptized, no matter whose it was—even Lily Popper's, when everybody knew that Lily married Sandy Popper just in time. And even quit the church right afterwards. But Betty said

you couldn't blame the baby for the mother's sin, and took the booties over anyway. In fact she even knit a sweater for him later when she heard how Lily went to taverns and neglected him. If anyone deserved a Christian home and husband, it was Betty. But it was just as certain she would never have one. Young men nowadays just don't know what to look for in a wife, said Mrs. Lederle. It was a perfect shame.

No one took the subject any further because of Mrs. Harkness, busy spooning out cucumber chunks but with her ears peaked ready for a word against young married women. They looked at her and then at Mrs. Simms who pursed her lips together and went to get *her* special pickles: watermelon rind. Mother came in fast on how the Bentley twins were growing, and the others joined in too with their comparisons of teeth and words and toilet training—but everyone was thinking anyway that Mary Harkness was one girl who never should have gotten married. She could never run a house for Irwin Simms the way he had it, always perfect, when he lived at home. Every week he had to take his shirts back to his mother or they never would be ironed right. Mary even made a joke of it, and didn't seem to care what other people thought of her. Even now, when here she had a chance to join the ladies and make them think she was a housewife too, she hadn't done a thing but plunk a cake and cold cuts on the table, and then run off to follow Irwin to the baseball diamond where the younger men were warming up already for the game this afternoon.

Mildred hardly knew just what to make of Mary Simms—or rather, what to make of how she felt toward her: sometimes fuming-mad, and sometimes bubbling-full of happiness, to think that Mary didn't care.

It was all mixed up, the way she felt toward Helping. She was glad to have the ladies smile at her, and proud that Mrs. Foote had trusted her to cut her special angel cake; and yet it was a little like the bittersweet that Mrs. Foote would always dribble on it—

bits of which were flaking off the knife and could be tongued along her palate for consideration. It was not altogether to her taste. Or not to all her tastebuds, all together. She had to hold back on her tasting, or her aftertasting, if she was to say she really liked it. Like when she smiled back at the ladies, she had to smile it fast before the other part of her decided not to smile at all.

If you could really say it might decide; because what was it anyway that could do anything, or could be even called a part of her when all it was, maybe, was just a cloudy wish that something like it would exist in her that wouldn't smile at ladies. Like someday someone—maybe she herself—would suddenly discover it and say, Look here, look what you have inside you that was never meant for this. A very little thing, oh very tiny. But ready to grow bigger, only waiting for the time and place you find for it. Only waiting till you're through with cutting cakes and putting paper cups around; till you've cleared away those flavor secrets of cucumber grated in the boiled dressing—

Really, Mrs. Lederle, there is no other secret.

Well I certainly will try it, thank you. I knew you wouldn't mind my taking just a little sample of it now, ahead of time. Just grate the cucumber, you say—

That's right. That's all there's to it.

So Mrs. Lederle was satisfied as much as she would ever be, with her suspicions that you always kept back something from your recipe so she would never have that special knack you had for making it.

Really Mrs. Lederle, her lips kept on repeating as she walked away. Really that is all there is. She had to hide her mouth behind her handkerchief, and mop at it like she was wiping perspiration. So the others wouldn't notice.

They were talking slower now, and forming little groups, or walking toward their children now their work was done. Some were standing quite alone and still—like strangers to the busy ladies they had been and would be when the dinner would begin.

They were waiting for their families to reach the picnic tables; then they would take up their lives again. That is all. There is no other secret. Or was each one waiting . . . holding still. . . .

Suddenly she felt like running up to Mother, tugging at her—like if she was still a little girl and short enough to pull on Mother's hem till she leaned over far enough and she could whisper in her ear. Then maybe she could ask her, Is it real? Is this our life?

But what would Mother, what would any of them say? A great big girl, and going into high school—they would laugh, or be ashamed, or even angry that she didn't know and had to blurt out questions like a child.

Worse worse than any child. The twins weren't spoiling Mrs. Bentley's picnic with their crying. They only asked to have their diapers changed; and she had planned for that, so she and Betty Fowler each got right to work to clean them up and hug them back to happiness again.

Or say those other kids would stop their chasing back and forth, and yell out for their mothers: it would be only that they lost a fight, or fell and skinned a knee. You wouldn't see them slumping on the grass to whimper Mama, was I really born for running. There was Agnes, her own sister, going after Emmett Simms and screaming she could beat him up; and Mother going out to stop them now and cool them down to eating; and Agnes saying Why? Why Mother?—but it was only why she couldn't keep on running, not why run at all, never once why everything.

Well that's the way kids were—alive before they even knew the word; of course they never asked it, Mother are we living. But the older ones, who knew a word should have a meaning—did they never wonder if they'd found it? Did they never ask each other? When they just walked up and down, like Betty Lou and Kathy and those other high school girls, just up and down the sidewalk past the drinking fountain where the boys were standing, drinking now and then, and spitting, but mostly just Not Watching as

the girls went past—didn't any single one of them say Look, we've walked this way before; let's try some other, far, far distant place; let's walk until we've found it?

Maybe each one kept on up and down because the others did, the way Bernetta Sawyer tried to match her life with theirs. In fact Bernetta would be satisfied if she could only make the others think she had a life like theirs. Otherwise she never would have said to Mildred after gym that day, Let's us be Best Friends, Millie. They both knew they didn't like each other; it was just because they always were the last ones chosen up for volleyball though they were both good players. It would only be a compact to pretend they had it like the others.

Bernetta's face was all one smile of triumph now that Mildred saw her walking with Naomi Bundeman, the missionary's daughter. At least for this one day, because Naomi was a visitor, Bernetta could pretend that she was in on everything. Mildred heard her bragging that she was a Gary Cooper fan club member, and that Gary wrote Sincerely on the photo that he autographed for her. Naomi was impressed—never stopped to ask if Mr. Cooper wrote Sincerely only to Bernetta, or how he could have meant it when he never even met her. Or how he could have meant it if he was acquainted with her.

Well of course not. Any more than Daddy would yell out he voted Democrat. He had a motto, Never argue with Republicans; so their drug store had a lot of customers, and he had friends to walk with to the picnic table.

Even so he kept a special wink for her that said We're different, aren't we Millie? You and I can really talk.

Unless it might embarrass him. Like what was on those undershelves that Mother never let her dust when they were cleaning up the store. Certain things a girl just shouldn't think about—

Just thinking where to sit.

Good! That's my girl. You see that watermelon down the line? That's where I'd sit if I were you.

He gave her just the gentlest sort of shove to get her started toward the high school crowd. I'd be there too if Mother didn't have a place marked out for me. Haven't had a slurp of watermelon yet this summer. Maybe you can sneak some up to me. Okay?

Okay.

She'd better find a place before she was the last one standing. The older folks were mostly settled down already; there was hardly any question where they'd sit. Rev. Foote was at the end, along with Mr. Partridge (sitting sideways) and the Missionary Bundemans. Then came Mrs. Foote, with Mrs. Schultz who always sat high up because the ladies knew how it must hurt her that her husband never Joined. The other wives and husbands sat together at the places marked out by the main dish they had brought. They passed the food around, of course, but always started with their own.

The littlest ones sat with their mothers, but the school kids always sat the farthest down. That left the middle tables for the inbetweens. Mildred finally settled on the Younger Married fringe, right next to Mary Simms. Mary smiled and said Hi Millie; so that was a beginning. Besides, the radio was here; and she could act like what she wanted was the baseball game instead of talking. Or anyway, with Warren Huesing sitting opposite, she would only have to laugh to keep in company. Warren always was a clown.

Just to look at him you'd think he was an idiot, the way his jaw hung open half the time, and how his yellow-flecky eyes looked watery and vague. But everybody said he only acted that way: he was really very smart and knew for ten years back the Big League Pennant winners and World Series scores. And other things of course. He acted stupid just to make the others laugh.

Now Warren Huesing maybe you'll behave for once now we have company, Bernetta said, walking up all smiles and hoping he would act up worse than ever for Naomi's benefit. Hello Millie, mind we sit down next to you?

She usually didn't like it that Bernetta sat with her, but with Naomi there between them it wouldn't be so bad. In fact it was a lucky thing, she should have thought of it before: now she could get to know the missionaries and the life in China. It would be a perfect picnic with Naomi there to talk to. She would ask her everything there was to know, and that way be prepared if she would ever get to visit China.

Of course she would not go abroad till she had seen America. Her favorite dream was how she would be riding in the Greyhound Bus, her suitcase on the rack, a box of dainty sandwiches and plums just opened on her lap, and rivers flowing by, and mountains off into the distance. And best of all, the inside feeling she would have, that she was really Mildred, on her way.

No matter if they had to start with food. That's how it always was—with all the dishes passing back and forth, and everybody saying they had never seen so many kinds of everything, and where in heaven's name were they supposed to put it all, and where on earth did all the olives go. (As usual, the kids had sneaked around and got them all down at their table.)

No use to spoil Naomi's concentration when there were a lot of hard decisions to be made. The plates weren't big enough to hold too many errors, and she couldn't simply dump somebody's baked dish if a better combination came along. Mildred usually took small helpings of her choices, and remembered what was best for seconds if she still had room. Some things she knew, of course, from picnics past: Mrs. Partridge made the best baked beans, for instance, with the sweetness baked right through—not simply gummed around the way Bernetta's mother fixed her Boston Style. Mrs. Hooper's deviled eggs were very good, and Mrs. Gilman's scalloped corn.

She could start their friendship with a few such observations. Tell her first the things she knew, and later on receive Naomi's information. She would of course be tactful, never saying Don't take this or that, there will be something better coming—no, she would make only certain positive remarks. This is Mrs. Leland's

Molded Pear and Cheese; I hope you can make room for it. And you must try Mrs. Taylor's Chicken Barbecue.

So then Naomi could at least say Thanks or something, just to get a conversation going. Or at least appreciate her counsel well enough to know just what her silence meant when something mediocre passed along. But no, she paid no heed. She just took anything that came along whenever she found space to put it on her plate. And stuck her fork in here and there for any mixed-up mouthful, just to keep on swallowing or just to keep on making room for more upon her plate. She had three potato salads mushed together by the time that Mildred's came along; and even after it was pointed out to her for special notice, she just plopped a spoonful on the pile with all the rest. And then, of all things, added Mrs. Fowler's German Style With Bacon. No use anymore to ask her did she taste the grated cucumber. She was just like Bernetta who was even gobbling up the baked beans that her mother fixed, when this one day she could have eaten something good.

Of course it might be for politeness that Naomi sampled everything. She might have been brought up in Chinese ways, and maybe Chinese ate whatever had been passed to them. Along with rice, of course. Best thing was to ask Naomi, get her started talking; otherwise Bernetta would be back on movie stars, and they would never get to China. Unless there was a Chinese Gary Cooper, or a Chinese Hollywood.

Better not to mention it. Just think of something else: one simple question that would lead to everything.

The trouble was, what could she ask about a whole great gob of people she had never even met? Or even seen, except their pictures in the paper. The more she thought about it all, the more she felt like asking Is there really such a place as China even, with Chinese walking all around and talking Chinese with each other. Do they go to bed and dream Chinese, and wake up in the morning thinking Chinese thoughts?

And would Naomi know what any Chinese might be thinking, if all she did was gulp down all the food they offered her? Millie tried to dream an Annual Chinese Picnic, and Naomi sitting there; but she couldn't somehow get it in her mind.

What do the Chinese eat on picnics? Rice?

Naomi jerked her head as if she must have heard wrong, and thought a dish of rice was being passed. Or maybe she meant yes, they do eat rice. Best thing was to try again.

Is it true, Naomi, that the Chinese eat with chopsticks?

Naomi nodded as she bent her head to get another mouthful. But yes or no was still another question; it was such a squirmy kind of nod. And maybe even meant for Mary Simms who was asking the whole table were they ready for some cake.

Mary laughed her special way to warn them what they could expect from her, a Mix. I always use a Mix; I'm not ashamed. She cut a great big hunk for Irwin which his mother saw and then remarked way up the line that she never would have baked her Devil's Food Delight if Mary would have mentioned she was going to bring a cake. Irwin laughed and said he'd gladly eat a piece of Devil's Food Delight along with Mary's Mix. But no, his mother said, he was already eating too much sweets; you could see he didn't have a proper diet, all those pimples on his neck.

I suppose the Chinese never have to worry over too much cake. At last she had the knack of it. She could ask a question that would start with food, but lead to something else about their life.

No they don't, Naomi said. And started in on Mary's Mix.

I suppose they're glad to get a bowl of rice, now that the Communists—

Oh Mildred, said Bernetta, rapping down her coca cola like she was a judge in some darn movie courtroom. Let her eat.

Well Bernetta, I was only asking—

Well stop asking then.

Bernetta looked as if she'd won some great big victory or something, and was hearing the whole crowd applaud. And just to top

it off, she plopped a piece of Mrs. Beeker's Spice Meringue on both their plates without so much as asking did Naomi want it.

Well of course that did it. Mildred didn't have to look around to see. That put Bernetta in with all the rest. She was acting for them all, and just as much as said it: that was all there was.

So let them listen all they wanted—all of them. She would stand up for them all to hear. Aren't you ever one bit interested, Bernetta? Don't you know that this might be your only chance to learn about the life in China?

If only she could say it without shaking with the sound: Don't you ever want to know how people really live?

She might have sat right down again if Warren Huesing hadn't caught her eye. Warren sat with all his mouth wide open; and the milk was trickling out the sides. Mary Simms was pulling at her fingers—at the fork. Well she could have the fork, and let them laugh at her for talking with her hands and waving silverware, let them ask if she had jewish in her veins. It was just like Daddy said, Don't argue with Republicans.

Millie, Millie, Mary Simms kept saying, though it didn't sound like Mary; it was much too far away and grown-up, like a mother. Millie. She was pressing at her hand and sending little sticky shivers through her, making her feel icy cold and sweaty all at once. Millie. Listen to me.

Don't you think Naomi wants to learn about us too? Maybe all she wants to do is sit here for a while and get to know America.

America! America! Never mind she spilled the coke, she had to get her hand away from Mary—Mary, who should know if any of them. You call this place America?

Now she could look around and ask them all. She had them now, she really had them by surprise. She saw their faces all torn open at the blast. Now she would ask them; now she would demand to know. Did they really think this was America—that she was going on the Greyhound to discover?

She would think just what to say; she would ask it just exactly right. And now that Rev. Foote was standing up, and Mother—they would really have it out.

But Mother came to tug at her, and wipe the coca cola from her dress. And Rev. Foote sat down again when Warren Huesing hollered out, I guess she thinks it's Timbuctoo. And everybody laughed of course, because whatever Warren Huesing said was always very funny.

They kept on laughing as she walked with Mother to the car. She wanted to go back and make them stop; but Mother held her arm. So she never had a chance to tell them they weren't in on it, and they would never find the promised land.

Winfield Townley Scott

JOHN WHEELWRIGHT AND HIS POETRY

To stand amid his Where and Whence
With verse in never-ending bout,
To figure some unworldly sense
And keep the melodic nonsense out . . .
—Robert Fitzgerald: "Portrait I" (J.B.W.)

How shall we see the right form
in which to lay these limbs,
in which to compose our memories
and know the man from this body . . . ?
—Frank Merchant: "Elegy" (for J.B.W.)

JOHN BROOKS WHEELWRIGHT was born in Milton, Massachusetts, on September 9, 1897, the son of Edmund March and Elizabeth Boott Wheelwright. His family on both sides were blue-blood New Englanders. He attended Fay School at Southboro, St. George's at Newport, and Harvard. Later as a special student he went to the M. I. T. School of Architecture. (His father had been the last city architect of Boston.) In his young years Wheelwright traveled a good deal, especially in Europe. He never married. Most of his life he lived with his mother at 415 Beacon Street. Early on the morning of September 15, 1940, he was struck down and killed by a drunken driver at the intersection of Beacon Street and Massachusetts Avenue. He is buried at Newburyport.

Between 1930 and 1940 Wheelwright published three volumes of poetry—*Rock and Shell, Mirrors of Venus,* and *Political Self-Portrait.* The final book listed another title as "forthcoming" and three more "in preparation." The year after his death there ap-

peared a slim but excellent *Selected Poems* edited by R. P. Blackmur. At that time "a complete edition" of Wheelwright's poetry was promised, but it has never materialized. Since his poetry is unique and valuable, this is a regrettable publishing defection. He was himself—by the way, but first of all—a unique and valuable person.

John Wheelwright was the only American poet who looked as though he might be a member of the Sitwell family. I would say he was about six feet tall. He was slender, long-fingered, nervous in movement; the hair a darkening blond receding from a high forehead; large nose and mouth but small, light-colored eyes which gave his otherwise impressive face an embarrassed attentiveness, shy or sly. "Cat-eyed, slit-eyed," Robert Fitzgerald wrote of him. His grin, his quick habit of blushing, were rather silly and endearing. He could be stern and snappish, like a righteous schoolmarm, the definitive chin setting hard. But he was often amused because basically he was serious, and I recall him as bubbling, gay, easily excited; he would go off in a rapture of whinnying giggle, talking right along through it. He spoke the struck-pie-tin, unresonant nasalities of Boston's upper class. Everybody called him Jack.

The poet and critic S. Foster Damon, who became Wheelwright's brother-in-law, first encountered him at bayonet drill for Harvard undergraduates during World War I. Damon was the instructor. After regarding the Wheelwright method with a bayonet, Damon said "Well, *you'll* be killed right away." But Wheelright was spared army service, and vice versa.

His class at Harvard was 1920, but he failed to graduate. In *Exile's Return* Malcolm Cowley says that Wheelwright "was the only student ever expelled from Harvard for misspelling a word. The word was 'nausea' and he shouldn't have used it when he was in a fix already. After a series of minor misdeeds Jack had been put on probation for simply forgetting to take the final examination in one of his courses. Students on probation had to attend

all their classes or offer an excuse that was convincing to the dean, who was hard to convince. Jack missed a class and then appeared in the dean's office with his excuse in writing: 'I was absent yesterday from English 14'—or whatever the course was— 'because I had acute *nausia* after seeing the moving picture, *Broken Blossoms.*' "*

My version of the story is that he saw a Mary Pickford movie and he spelled nausea "gnorshor," a reasonable deduction from Boston pronunciation. And I believe I got my version from Wheelwright or from someone in his presence; but I have found Malcolm Cowley, like that dean, hard to convince—he says it is exfoliation of legend.

Wheelwright may yet become generally legendary. He was, as I have said, unique. He could be exasperating, charming, rude, kind. He roused people to fury and also he inspired deep affection. He was "well-born" enough to take the fact for granted; perhaps he liked it; in any case it gave him a substantial stand from which to assail the capitalist system. He was a rebel. He was a devout Episcopalian and also he was an active member of the Socialist Workers Party. He was a proletarian poet on Beacon Street. He was an aristocrat and a radical artist. These seeming contradictions were certainly not in his mind contradictions at all; the very core of his poetry is a hard consistency of social-political-religious beliefs. The gestures of his life might baffle or enrage others; to Wheelwright all were sweetly reasonable conduct. He was, simply, not like anybody else; but he did have a regional, identifying characteristic—he was an old-fashioned New England individualist overbred to eccentricity.

Of course he had in him elements of deliberate impishness. The Harvard letter shows that. He was not unselfconscious. The

* Cf: "She remembered so well seeing with him 'Broken Blossoms' with Richard Barthelmess as a young Chinaman and Lillian Gish as a cockney child. It was a revelation in what photography could do and pantomime convey. As the sordid yet spiritual story unfolded itself in the menacing shadows of a Limehouse night, Susan began to cry and held tighter to Timothy's hand." Etc. *Half a Loaf*, by Grace Hegger Lewis. (Timothy is Sinclair Lewis.)

excuse to the dean also shows an exactitude for truth from which I think Wheelwright seldom departed. Also, the letter was ineffectual; and that too is a symbol though perhaps not, beyond his mortal years, the dominant one.

His mind had to an extreme a literal quality. For example, take the occasion when he insulted Amy Lowell. At a reading and discussion she conducted before the Harvard Poetry Society, Wheelwright, aged 19, asked "How do you write, Miss Lowell, when you have nothing to say?" * Years afterward he delighted to tell or hear anyone else tell that story, and he used it in one of his most ingratiating poems; but the point was he hadn't the slightest intention of insulting Miss Lowell. He was inquiring for information. He wanted to know how one might write poetry out of mere impulse. Incidentally, he never discovered.

Or there was the fur coat episode. He sported a luxuriant raccoon coat. I can see him now, tossing it to a corner of the floor with that carelessness only the well-born can manage. One bitter day in Boston he appeared with it—and spats—in a Socialist parade. Someone afterward remonstrated with him on the grounds of what was suitable wear for revolutionary-protest appearances. "But," he replied, "I had to keep warm."

He told me he planned to give up coffee for Lent, to drink tea at breakfast. A proper expiation for an ardent high churchman. At the same time he confessed to a perfectly factual worry: would tea in the morning be as effectual as coffee in moving the bowels?

That evening in the early 1930's when, for all I know, I first met him—at a literary gathering in Stewart Mitchell's Cambridge apartment—Wheelwright was on his knees begging forgiveness of Robert Hillyer, who temporarily refused to speak a civil word to him. Wheelwright's offense was again (I think) a literal-minded inadvertency. He had recently clipped things he wanted to save from a pile of back numbers of magazines; thoughtful

* "What do you do when you want to write a poem and haven't anything to write about?" is the less offensive version given in *Amy Lowell*, by S. Foster Damon. My quotation is from Wheelwright's poem about Miss Lowell, "Dinner Call."

amidst his labors he had clipped some Hillyer poems and mailed them to Hillyer with a friendly note: "Perhaps these will be of some use to you."

I am reminded that Wheelwright designed Hillyer's country house in Pomfret, Connecticut. He was a great student of architecture (and was writing a book in that field at the time of his death) but I think he practiced architecture very little; in fact he may not ever have been a licensed architect. In any case the Hillyer house had charm, for without really being large it gave a sense of comfortable spaciousness. Perhaps my recollection that it was not the architect but the carpenters who thought to put in stairs to the second story is one of those trite canards. His poetry is architectural in its thoughtful building line by line, in its utter adherence to the principle that form follows function. There too Wheelwright would sometimes omit the stairs, and whenever friends reminded him he hastened off to put in the neglected main point: he was very sweet and humble about that sort of thing.

In the 1930's he had little money. The family financial status though still existent had obviously sunk. His clothes were good, but usually worn and slightly old-fashioned. One economy he labored for a spell was unnecessary but he enjoyed it: he devised what I termed swill soup—he would scrape almost every kind of leftover except coffee grounds into a perpetually simmering pot. I suppose what fortune remained was in his mother's hands: a cane-thumping, sibilant, deaf and terrifying dowager who glared as though to exterminate a world she'd never made. Her tolerance of her younger son's poetic and political activities was rumored to be unnoticeable. Yet she was rather wonderful, like all vigorous anachronisms.

They lived in a typical tall and narrow brick house, steps and windows front and back and houses built wall-to-wall on either side. A dark, elegant house. I remember a fountain. I remember a purring fireplace of a winter's morning in the room where Jack

would get to his writing after breakfast. All was luxurious, solid-seeming, safe-looking inside 415 Beacon Street. I remember too how startled I was by the severity of the bawlingout he gave the servants over my luggage having been put in the wrong room. I hadn't known that anybody, let alone Socialists, spoke like that to other people.

Well, he had a quick waspishness when he wanted. And like many sensitive, introverted types he could be hurtfully insensitive to others, if only momentarily. One instance involved myself. He invited me to Boston to take part in a shortwave broadcast of poetry readings, one of a series he conducted during the late 1930's. Robert Lowell, then a student at Kenyon College, and Dr. Merrill Moore were the other participants. At supper afterwards the name of Edwin Arlington Robinson came into the conversation. Wheelwright detested Robinson's work quite as thoroughly as—he knew—I admired it. He turned on me (I was then 28 and the author of one book of poems) and said "You'll never get anywhere unless you get Robinson out of your system. After all, nobody pays any attention to *you*."

That sort of brutality was a small aspect of a quality in Wheelwright which was large and admirable. I have known nobody else so selflessly devoted to the art of poetry; except E. A. Robinson; and nobody so selflessly aware of and interested in the poetry of other writers. It was the poetry—the art—that always mattered, and never first of all the person. In this as in all his processes, intellectual principle was the dominant reality. Of course this tended to make him oblivious of some simpler realities, as when in his desire for criticism he kept a fatigued poet up half the night listening to Wheelwright manuscripts until the visiting fireman was actually ill. It could make him high-handed as when, in Florence in 1923, he published an editorially wrecked version of Hart Crane's "Faustus and Helen" in the magazine *Secession* and had Crane screaming rape. Also it could set him for hours trying to revise his younger friends' immature verse (I find I own a

sample, his squiggly handwriting attempting change after change to solidify a few overblown lines). And it made him capable of such observation as: "I think Horace Gregory is a better poet than I," which is a rare remark for a poet to make about any other living poet.

I have no recollection which poets, aside from a few of his contemporaries, Wheelwright admired. He inveighed against Archibald MacLeish on the grounds of political opinion and he called T. S. Eliot a snob. Because of his piety he might have been expected to take part in the admiration of Gerard Manley Hopkins; he did not. "I'll show you," he said to a group of us, "what Hopkins sounds like." Whereupon he made an interminable series of vomiting noises—retching sprung rhythm till we thought he'd never stop.

At a reception given by Theodore Spencer for Allen Tate, neither host nor guest of honor was overly astounded when Wheelwright made from one end to the other of the room a slow progress underneath the huge floor rug; nor was Wheelwright perturbed when he emerged, dusted his clothes lightly, and opened conversation with a group of speechless undergraduates. This may have been about the time he was tossed out of Yaddo, the literary colony. His offense there was preempting a bathroom all day during which, comfortable in the tub, he had eaten bananas while contemplating a little black Buddha. Banana skins all over the place. So he returned by train to Boston, getting into trouble en route as usual, since he insisted on smoking in any car he happened to be.

One of the newspaper obituaries said Wheelwright had been expelled from the John Reed Club for alleged divulgence of the club secrets; another said he was expelled as a disorganizer, and that then, in association with the wellknown Socialist Alfred Baker Lewis, founded the Friends of the Rebel Arts. He was also active in the 1920's and '30's in the New England Poetry Club.

Poetry clubs are all alike. They are pathos on parade. They

may and usually do enroll a few eminent poets and a few younger, lively ones. But these, as in real life, are bound to be a marked minority. The general odor of the poetry club is that of unadmitted mediocrity. Such clubs are founded on the ridiculous notion that prayer is bettered by prayer-meetings; and nothing actually is accomplished by them save the unhappy embarrassment of that marked minority and the exhibitionism of the meagerly talented and the untalented.

John Wheelwright, as you would expect, was a gadfly amidst the meetings of the New England Poetry Club. He was sarcastic and different and faithful and divulgent to the point of disorganizing; probably he thought of himself as a missionary. He was not, however, expelled. On the contrary he was made Vice-President and permitted to write *A History of the New England Poetry Club, 1915-1931*. This is a 51-page pamphlet which may be described as rare.

Eight years previously Abbie Farwell Brown had prepared a much smaller pamphlet "Outline of History" of the Club, so we may begin by contrasting the Brown and Wheelwright treatments of the same events. For instance, Miss Brown recorded that in February 1916 at Miss Lowell's "Mr. Untermeyer read his Willow poem and some delightful parodies. Mrs. Untermeyer read a gorgeous poem on 'Clothes' from her volume, 'Growing Pains.' " Wheelwright tightens this to: "Mr. Untermeyer read his 'Willow' poem and some parodies. Mrs. Untermeyer read a poem on clothes."

Miss Brown has a chaste paragraph for February 8, 1917: "At the first annual meeting for the election of officers . . . the following officers were chosen: . . ." etc. Wheelwright: "In February, Josephine Peabody was elected President. The election was turbulent, and the rivalries between groups of ladies so bitter, that the gentlemen finally withdrew to the University Club. It must be remembered that the Free Verse Revolt was at this time at its height, and we may ascribe the battle over the Presidency not so

much to personal animus as to aesthetic principle. On the conservative side, the militants, led by Lilla Cabot Perry, desired Josephine Peabody for President. On the other hand, Amy Lowell felt that were she not re-elected, poetic experiment would seem to be repudiated by her fellow New Englanders. We freely admit that these abstract principles descended to a deplorable depth of personal incrimination. . . . Those who were present on this occasion may refresh their memories from our hint that the obesity of felines was publicly banded as a shuttlecock between the contending criteria. 'You cats' were Miss Lowell's parting words. 'Anyhow, we are not *fat* cats' were the last words, pointed if inaccurate, which she was to hear from the society in many years."

One more—Miss Brown as of February 14, 1923: ". . . the Club enjoyed a merry Valentine Party at Mrs. Perry's studio. About fifty new valentines were read, addressed to the various members and to other famous people: a love-feast." And Wheelwright: "On St. Valentine's Day, the Club held a party at Mrs. Perry's studio. Mr. Hillyer, the President, had not been present at the Board meeting which determined the program for that event. On being maliciously informed by Mr. Damon that Katharine Bates, with the unanimous support of the Committee, had determined that he, in the character of Cupid, should give two valentines to every person present, [he] firmly declined to appear with that deity's costume and attributes."

Whether filling in Miss Brown's "Outline" or carrying it blithely on, Wheelwright prattled with color:

"Mr. Daniel Hugh Verder was virtually legendary in his activities at Harvard. It is said that even in stern Conant Hall, he could rouse business students from their couches with his query: 'Do you like poetry?' and, notwithstanding their protests, would recite his verses. He subsequently became a constant contributor to the Boston *Transcript*. . . . *Poet Lore* was sold to Richard G. Badger, a sucker-snatcher. . . . The year was marked by increase of membership, although Edna Millay did not reply to our invita-

tion, and Phelps Putnam declined on the score that poets are not fertilized by personal associations, but by chance, loneliness, or liquor." Etc.

In John Heard Jr.'s biography of the Rev. John Wheelwright, rebel divine of the 17th century and first member of the family in America, the famed ancestor of the poet is characterized as "Bold and upright . . . tact and diplomacy were conspicuous by their complete absence." The ancestor is hailed in one of the poems as

> John, founder of towns,—dweller in none;
> Wheelwright, schismatic—schismatic from schismatics; . . .
> Saint, whose name and business I bear with me;
> rebel New England's rebel against dominion; . . .

His rebellion—the poet's—was expressed in print during the mid-1930's in a little magazine he ran, *Poems for a Dime*. Its copies were advertised as: "Three for two bits. Six for fifty cents. Twelve for a buck." That sort of thing, and his sudden habit in his poetry of contracting "them" to "'em," could have only a Fauntleroyan air of toughness. Boys from Fay School and St. George's and probably even from Harvard don't talk that way. But those were the brave days of social protest in poetry—ghastly productions were perpetrated in its name, but I'm not sure it wasn't a healthier era than our present of creeping conservatism—and Wheelwright published his own and other's Leftish diatribes. The magazine is one of the revealing, important documents of American verse of that time.

So far as I know, Wheelwright did not pay for the publication of his three books, but he substituted for underwriting a highly active part in the production and sale of the books. Bruce Humphries, Boston, was the publisher. Wheelwright's friend Sherry Mangan, poet and novelist, designed and handset the first two books in excellent taste; the third, though less impressive typographically, was well designed by Wheelwright himself. And it was he who circularized potential buyers for these books. I re-

call that when the first, *Rock and Shell,* was issued, some of his friends—or acquaintances—were annoyed by the direct approach to buy. "That book ought to be called 'Shell Out the Rocks,' " one Cantabridgean grumbled to me in the rain in Harvard yard.

None of the books is a collection, as most poets' are, of recent best work. Each book, like each poem, is an architectural problem: Wheelwright sought to build a unit of expression; and so the contents of each of the three are drawn from work written over a couple of decades and more. Thus *Political Self-Portrait* describes by title a very deliberate assemblage of poems; *Mirrors of Venus* gathers thirty-five sonnets into a sequence on friendship; and *Rock and Shell* is a spiritual-intellectual autobiography.

If a stranger to the poems took at least a curious glance at these volumes he would perceive oddity. Every poem bears a dedication to somebody and these, while frequently literary persons, run all the way from Harold Laski and Leon Trotsky to the Harvard Class of 1920 and "my Saviour." The first and third volumes contain an "Argument" section of prose notes, careful commentaries on the poems; and in *Mirrors of Venus* each sonnet is faced with such a notation and quite often carries, in addition, numerals down the page indicating the rhyme scheme.

All this is small matter save as it suggests an intense urge to connect, almost a desperation to communicate. *Time* magazine, a month after Wheelwright's death, referred to him as "one of the most famous unheard-of poets in the U.S." Even more than most poets nowadays, Wheelwright had to bring to bear great energies not only to write his poetry but to get it published. Innate eccentricity and conscious rebelliousness combined to give him a bravado of integrity; but it is not unlikely that this man, going into his forties, was a lonely man who felt too much of the time that he spoke his passions into the mindless wind.

There are many people who knew John Wheelwright more intimately than I and who could write more knowledgeably of him;

and I am as aware that there are those better fitted to analyze his poetry.* No real poetry gives itself at a glance, and all durable poetry continually renews itself. But Wheelwright's is, after all, as symbolic as Blake's, crankier than Emerson's or Dickinson's, and not less allusive than Hart Crane's. His verse is rarely beguiling and sometimes reader-resistant; yet the way in which he performed has interest *per se*. His poems are so compacted with thought that the most of them would reward a line-by-line analysis. To undertake such examinations would require a thesis. At this time, however, it should be worthwhile even to indicate something of what he said and of how he said it.

All his books are probably unprocurable save at libraries. One would like to urge the new reader to go first to the *Selected Poems* with its admirable Note by Blackmur (and though it is a book of only 26 pages, half the poems in it are not in the others), then proceed to the three volumes, with particular care for *Rock and Shell*, altogether the most distinguished.

I have gossiped at length about him as a "character" for there is a direct relationship between his real self (finally to be found in his work) and his time and place. What Dublin was to Joyce, Boston was to Wheelwright. Boston was his background, his society, the point of reference where he tested his intellectual and spiritual findings. There was, as with Joyce, the inescapable tie of belonging; there was, similarly, disdain for much of his city's cultural past and a greater contempt for its present. His love found expression in chastisement.

In one of his *Venus* sonnets he spoke of a desire "to lay a morbid culture's ghost." It was one of his mildest remarks. This is more typical:

* *A History of American Poetry: 1900-1940*, by Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska, contains several pages of useful discussion of Wheelwright's life and work, but there hasn't been to my knowledge any other. Some remarks in R. P. Blackmur's *Language as Gesture* are less essential than Blackmur's Note to Wheelwright's *Selected Poems* (New Directions I, 1941). Also, Wheelwright has been very infrequently anthologized.

Our masks are gauze and screen our faces for those unlike us only,
Who are easily deceived. Pierce through these masks to our unhidden tongues
And watch us scold, scold with intellectual lust; scold
Ourselves, our foes, our friends; Europe, America, Boston; and all that is not
Boston; till we reach a purity, fierce as the love of God;—Hate.
Hate, still fed by the shadowed source; but fallen, stagnant fallen;
Sunk low between thin channels; rises, rises; swells to burst
Its walls; and rolls out deep and wide. Hate rules our drowning Race. . . .

His note explains that this poem (of which I have given only the opening lines) is "a rhapsody upon the type Bostonian, embodies in part the author's response to the case of Sacco and Vanzetti during the latter year of whose trial it was composed. Yankee Hate, whose shadowed source is individual predestination turned secular, takes on corporate personality now and again in chauvinism; but is otherwise dominant only as it weakens separate selfish minds."

Adjacent poems in *Rock and Shell* declare other facets. "Salvation Army Girl" exhibits a characteristic Wheelwright within Wheelwright: he is intolerant of intolerance, he is also intolerant of "tolerance" which is really indifference; he is also uncompromising. Fiercer still are his poem "To Wise Men on the Death of a Fool" and his notes about it. This is a brilliant poem on the career and suicide of Harry Crosby, proper Bostonian gone expatriate, demi-poet, sun-worshipper, sensation-seeker.* A perfect foil for Wheelwright, Crosby, with a similar background, sought nonsensical solutions. Wheelwright's elegy takes care to put the benighted Crosby in his place and at the same time put the mercantile-financial world against which Crosby rebelled in *its* place. If Crosby was "too eager to amaze," let State Street know that "His mad impiety is holier than your sane / Infidel doubt."

* See *The Passionate Years*, by Caresse Crosby; *Exile's Return*, by Malcolm Cowley; *Paris Was Our Mistress*, by Samuel Putnam; *Hart Crane*, by Philip Horton; Crosby's own journal, *Shadows of the Sun*; et. al.

Wheelwright's commentary on this poem caroms back to himself, and so I shall quote part of it:

"... Crosby tried to live art rather than, even, to live for art which is, as a profession, quite dangerous enough. His perilous experiment farced life and verse. His mind suffered from impediments implanted there by the code of manners under which he was reared. The mock society into which he was born had emasculated him. It seeks to emasculate every male child. In the name of all that is called wholesome it shields its young from an early impact with the whole force of culture, that they may forever be concerned only with destructive busying in stocks and bonds, or at worst in publishing. But culture takes a terrible vengeance upon its victims. Long and effectively has this mock society conducted itself by ignoring the fact that men's comprehension of matters of the mind chiefly distinguishes them from women.... Now-a-days no one can claim to fame who does not at some point war against the hostility to manhood which at all points presses upon imaginative work. Harry Crosby died for this."

There is Wheelwright, like his namesake-ancestor, "rebel New England's rebel against dominion." Of dominion's essence are the worlds of finance and matriarchy in a fixed society. Against materialism, Wheelwright would oppose Christ. Against the emasculation by a softened-up culture, he would oppose powerful creative art. He lived for this. All his work relates to these bases. And if you accept his premises it is all utterly consistent.

He had one indecision. *Political Self-Portrait* reveals reiterant doubt as to what *culture* a proletarian society would erect. It was something he could not know. He could go only so far as the belief that "one can never be premature in arousing the masses to their cultural duties and to the joy of living." A gentleman's remark—but I don't see how he could honestly have escaped the tone. He was not sentimental.

He was a Christian-pacifist-revolutionist. Since his proletarian verse was grounded in a religious faith, this gave him an intellec-

tual scheme and poetic symbols, and unlike a lot of his contemporaries he never misused poetry to the point of mere tract. Much of his proletarian verse dates now as fatally as any and in that way is as bad as most, but unlike most of its sort it has not become uninteresting. There is too much going on in it.

One of the notes in *Rock and Shell* observes: "The uses of poetry are: to sound, to show, to teach. Whereas the first two of these have lately undergone complex clarification, now the didactic, if it is to assume its place with them, must undergo proportionate handling. . . . The main point is not what noise poetry makes, but how it makes you think and act,—not what you make of it; but what it makes of you."

In the *Selected* Wheelwright, Blackmur says "It is always more difficult to assent to a poet's music than to his will or his subject matter; and rightly so, because, if anything, it is his music which is new. Wheelwright made assent more difficult than usual because he was cranky about the basis of his meters. In a great deal of his work he based the length and look of his lines upon equivalence of stresses. He held lines to be in balance, to continue or to complete a pattern, if the major stresses came out even. The number of unstressed syllables did not count, but their cumulative value did count. . . . At worst, his practice cost him his tune. But for the most part his ear had the luck to come within the common ear of English speech."

Wheelwright used rhyme sparingly. He may have been suspicious of it as a convention. Sometimes he buried it unobtrusively and sometimes, trying to freshen rhyme, he displayed it awkwardly; but his larger and generally more important poems go without it.

He had, in Blackmur's phrase, "a kind of naive or direct-eyed shrewdness." He tried for exact observation and his poems are tightly crammed, every word (ideally) counting. And, as you must gather from my description of how he put each of his books together, his poems interpenetrate. On this he came a cropper in

Mirrors of Venus where he attempted to form "a novel in sonnets" from the scattered poems of almost a quarter-century. A few of the numbers, as he termed them, are impressive when excerpted from the sequence; but the book as a whole is annoyingly contrived.

His grace of description might easily go unnoted within the forcefulness of his larger purposes as poet. In a fine poem called "Quick Curtain" there is this handling of puppet imagery:

> Operators behind the ceiling
> had tangled up the wires
> and taut cords held our heads high.
> I could not turn a quarter-circle
> nor advance the requisite half-step
> to lift my arms up, move them over
> and drop my head on hers
> with the abrupt simplicity of a doll . . .

And there is in "Forty Days" with a leap to rhetoric a magnificent passage describing the ascension of Christ. It begins:

> The arms stretched as if for flight—
> the five Scars glowed—
> his chest lifted as for breath,
> and his heels, as if for dancing;
> between, beneath his toes
> the red clay clung and kissed them.—
> The legs hung from the hips
> a bell below the torse,
> swung like a bell below the hips;
> he lifted his chin in song. . . .

Nothing in the more ambitious of the revolutionist poems remains as authoritative as that. Such poems as "Footsteps" and "Masque With Clowns" (their choruses strip to red shirts and shout: "Karl Marx has joined Knowledge with Power" and "Beware! The final Revolution stirs!") seem overwrought and mere-

tricious. (Any reader interested in the *extent* of Wheelwright's socialism will also be interested in the fact that in 1940 Wheelwright wrote of "Stalin's Red Fascism.")

How startlingly he could write may be seen in the poem beginning "Jump, Jesus! Jump. Up, do not stand for it"; how densely he would write appears in any number of places where the rebel against the overstuffed in poetry sometimes repels with the overcrowded.

Did Wheelwright make the error of believing that intellectuality has a great deal to do with poetry? I think that in his didacticism he was bound to. The emotional language of poetry is often lacking in his verse, or so understated by reason of an intent to pack meaning that a necessary grace is missing. And this is not a virtue. Yet, to a point, one comes to respect, even admire, his crankiness—the kind he praised in "Mossy Marbles." It is, unadmitted, his own apologia. After a chill nod to the "minor singers" of the "sobbing bow," Wheelwright proclaims:

> . . . Pity the strong alone
> Who seldom show their weakness,
> Whose hearts break with no sign
> But withered lips and tresses,
> Who know, if sounding chord
> To all their thought were given,
> If they trod out the wine
> Longed for, from memory's presses,—
> The dissonances, poured
> Would sour their own heaven.

One thinks of Blake. Probably through his brother-in-law—Damon was a pioneer in explication of Blake—that complex poet had a profound influence on Wheelwright. In Wheelwright the symbols are deduced, not invented; or they are re-energized for his particular purposes. He is clumsy as Blake is clumsy, but he has not a comparable lyric skill (his descriptive skill is another matter). Like Blake's his mind is so logical it sometimes seems

perverse. And there is, also, the to-hell-with-the-audience air in the poems, which at worst is more than the usual difficulty of new poetry; it is made up of references for which we require notes and such poems, thereby, are not so independent as poems should be.

It is part of Wheelwright's integrity, of course, that he gave no palm to halfway measures. He hounded Truth. Therefore the didactic note in all his poetry, his effort to objectify and dramatize. The image is never for its own sake: sense must be made of it—a thing said. His obituary poems on Hart Crane, Crosby, and Miss Lowell say definitive things; like all his best poems, they survive with a remarkable solidity. Where his thought attained the vigor of eloquence, neither matter nor manner damaged by the other, he wrote poems which repeatedly reward attention and which should give him a yet unsuspected importance in the history of American poetry.

Out of that eccentric individualism of which I have written, he did in fact achieve, as Frank Merchant's "Elegy" declares, "unheard truths." He preached that poetry, love, and politics are three friends, though his poems referring to human love refer to it as incomplete or frustrate. He hated the dead hand, whether past or present, and said that "habit is evil,—all habit, even speech." Pity he thought "foreign to the love of truth," and observed that "his wrath is weak, whose rage can crack his heart." He repeats a phrase—in separate poems—about "the double guns of Word and Deed"; and, always the intellectual, he believed that thought (the Word) preceded action—after that, "Deeds make us." He drew from Liebknecht: "always the enemy is the foe at home." Saints, he said, are first of all rebels; and there remained a deeply moral question, "how to bring others to good, who are not so ourselves?"

So here we have a poet who embodied the political-social preoccupations of poetry in the Depression era and a prophecy of the religious turn contemporary poetry was to take in the following decades. In both he is much more solid than most of the political

poets of his time and all the religious ones in ours. For he did not adopt attitudes. They grew in him and forced his architecture as person and poet. Now we have among poets passionate Anglicans who are also passionate for royalty and/or the private school; and we have passionate Catholics who may once have been but now can no longer be passionate Communists; we have converts converted *from* something; and so on. All these wigglers would be consigned in Wheelwright's factual mythology to the side of Satan and Cain, servers of "the Furies not the Muses." They serve half-gods. And whether one "agrees with" Wheelwright's doctrines is beside the point of his unique consistency. At no time in his life or art did he confuse conviction with the absolutism of the status quo. If now by accident he has become a sort of ancestor, the descendants are by comparison a shallow lot; in part I think because the ancestor, as so often happens, is not fully known.

Ellis Foote

A DAY FOR THE RAIN

OLD MA wasn't around as Tade tromped in and peered around the house, but there was a note on the table saying she'd gone to Relief Society meeting to help pray for rain, and there was mush on the stove for him when he got back from taking the water. He looked at the pot of cold mush and groaned, then turned and went out of the empty house and sat on the step. He rolled himself a cigarette and whacked a match across the tight of his rear.

"Hell, *what* water?" he snorted.

A flock of crows cawed up from Dry Gulch. Tade turned his head in their direction and saw two men on horses riding up out of the gulch and heading his way. Squinting, he quickly recognized the men by their horses. "That one's the bishop's bay mare; the other's that old crowbait of Ors's," he mused. He flicked his cigarette away, and stood up.

The visitors tied their Mormon schooners to the fence and came up smiling pleasantly, Brother Obe in the lead. "Well, we're around Ward visitin," he said, shaking hands.

"The members a the bishopric are visitin all the homes this month," Orson explained. "Jist seein how conditions are."

Orson's face, after the pleasantries were over, became a mask of gloom. Tade reflected that he looked wearier than usual.

"Shade dry," Tade said.

Obe stood in front of the doorway, peering with one eye into the dark screen. "The Lord says where two or three shall meet, there shall his spirit be also. Mebbe we better go inside an let Sister Larsen pertake a the spirit, too."

"Glad to have you in, a course," Tade said, "only the old

woman ain't around. Went gallivantin off to Relief Society this mornin. Ain't back yet."

Big Obe opened the other eye a trifle. "By grab, that's so. Sisters meetin to pray for rain today. Well, it's exackly what the country needs." He turned and looked at the others significantly. "You want anything done right, you jist sic the Sisters onta it."

Then he started laughing. "Reminds me a the summer—what year was that, Brother Orson?—the Sisters prayin fer rain. Steamin it up inside the meetin house till they couldn't even see out the winders. Bellyachin the Almighty till he bust a whole cloud right on top a us!" Obe guffawed and whacked his thigh. "Come late afternoon, us Brethern was all out rescuin our livestock an fixin the bridges, up to our asses in rainwater. An the Sisters still in there prayin fer more rain."

Obe wiped his eyes. "Sure hope their prayers is answered," he said apologetically.

"Well, mebbe we kin all jist set here on the step, in the shade a the bowery." He inspected the step cautiously for chicken tracks, then sat heavily, motioning the others down.

"The message we want to put across to you, Brother Tade, is to so live in this life that you may be found worthy of glory an exaltation in the nex world," Obe began. He pulled a Church leaflet from his pocket and handed it to Tade. "It says in the Doctor an Covenants 'Behold, I, the Lord, have looked on you, an seen many abominations in the Church. But blessed are they as are faithful an indore, whether in life er death, for they shall inherit eternal life. But woe unto them as are deceivers an hypercrites, for, thus saith the Lord, I will bring em to jedgment.' " He looked at Tade sternly for a moment, with one eye shut.

"How's yer crop doin?" he asked finally.

"Oh, it's all burn ta hell," Tade answered. "Won't raise a damn thing this year outsiden a little garden an a few loads a first cuttin hay."

"Too bad," Obe said. "Same way with me. Same way 'th all of us down here the end a the ditch."

He shook his big head. "Guess it's the same you fellers up on the bench, ain't it, Orson?"

Orson made no answer, except that a smile of "Yes, that's how it is," crossed his face, quickly followed by a look of strain.

He had been looking north toward the mountains when Obe asked him the question. He had been thinking, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help and my salvation." But the hills were unmoved, unpitying, and heeded not; particularly, they wept not streams of water as in other years. They simply endured, remote, aloof, and were as brass; and the sky too was as brass. And the place known as Clay Basin—a clayey, or sandy, or rocky wilderness, depending where you were in it, glossed by fields and fences and houses and sheds—was beginning to show through again as it was in the beginning when God made it, sixty years ago or sixty-million years ago, or whenever it was, and not a fit place for man or beast. . . .

These thoughts were in Ors Larsen's mind, and more—a growing suspicion that God had not even made this part of the world at all; had just let it fall into being by itself—sun-washed, water-worn, wind-wiped and warped out of shape by a million strains from here to hell-and-gone. And seeing He was busy somewhere else anyway, maybe God had decided to let this part of the world stay just the way it was, on the chance it would hold and not let the world fall apart, until He was ready to build a new one altogether.

Tade swapped the Church leaflet for a jack-knife in his pocket, and reached for a stick to whittle. "I hear tell there's been a little water thievin goin on on the bench," he let fall craftily.

"That so?" Obe asked, looking up.

"Yep. Not to mention any names, but old Ben, the water master, was tellin me about it this mornin. Said it was one a the brethern." He inclined his head slightly toward his cousin Orson.

"Be damned!"

"Said they caught him red-handed. Said they seen yesterday where his ditch was wet out a turn. So they hid in the willers by

his headgate last night, thinkin he might try for more. Waited around in pitch dark, listnin to killdeers and hooten owls an mistakin night hawks for the culpert till they was all as nervous, I Jesus, as a old cow havin a two-headed calf. Well, to make the short of it, he finely showed up."

"Pitch dark, you say?" Obe asked.

"Couldn't see their hands before their faces, Ben said. But they knowed who the feller was. Stood up an hollered his name. Well, sir, Ben said, it like to scairt this here brother plumb shitless. He drop that shovel he was totin, an jumped five differnt directions right in the middle a them fellers, then skunned out while they was pickin theirselves up. They lit out after him, a-cussin worsen they was old Ors here preachin at a unbeliever's funerl, but they never could ketch im. Still, he said they knowed who it was."

Obe tittered. "You say they didn't ketch him, though, right outen out?"

"Well, no—no moren they called his name an he lit right smackdab in the middle a them fellers, the biggest quorum a just one scairt an fightin-mad elder they ever come in contack with. Then he struck out through them willers, scratchin like a tomcat."

Obe was relieved. "I wouldn't think they caught him redhanded, in that case," he said. "What do you think about it, Brother Orson?"

Orson was slow and careful in answering. "I wouldn't say it wasn't one a the brethern, an I wouldn't say it was. Neither one or the two, till I hear the whole story. Could a been, but on the other hand—." He paused, then went on ruefully. "People always knockin somebody in the Church. Seems like the harder a man tries to do good, the harder they knock him."

Big Obe nodded his head; Tade ducked his.

"Way I figger it," Orson continued, "it was one a them Greeks up there on the bench. They're always stealin water. Bribe old Ben with Greek wine so he won't say nothin. Somebody else hollers loud enough, Ben'll finely drag em in an they git fined a hun-

derd bucks or so an let go. Sons a bitches already had a thousand dollars worth a water, though. Fine crops ever year.

"No, if old Ben and his cronies hadn't been tanked up on Greek wine they'd seed who it was, dark or no dark. I don't think it was anybody in the Church."

Obe took long and prudent counsel of his thoughts, then leaned forward and spat.

"Well, I kin see how a man might a done her, Brother Orson," he said. "Way I figger it, a man jist stands there an can't figger what to do about her—his crops a-burnin up an water goin by in the ditch, an him a member a the Church in good standin. He gets to lookin at that water an thinkin how many times he's hepped the Church an everybody out, an he don't suppose the Lord or anybody'd mind now if he hepped hisself a little; that is, if they knowed all the facks. So he aiges the headgate up a little some night an looses a tiny stream through, which mebbe gits higher if nobody ain't lookin. That's the way I see her."

Orson raised his head and looked nervously at the hills again.

"But I don't figger it was anybody in the Church either, Brother Orson." Obe continued softly. "Not by any stretch a the imagination. It must a been one a them Greeks."

Tade doubled up his knife and slid it back into his pocket. "I kind a figgered it might a been one a them Greeks all the time old Ben was tellin me," he said sheepishly.

"Well, anyhow," Obe went on, "it jist goes to show you, to some the light is given and to some the light is not given; an it behooves all us who has been given the light to live up to its teachins. A man, no matter who he is, be he Mormon, Jew, or Gentile, kin do most anything he wants in this life; an sometimes he gets away with it an sometimes he won't, but—" he waxed prophetic, looking one-eyed out into seething, heat-spiralling, blue space over the scorched hills—"the hour cometh an I tell you it ain't far off when things is goin to be a blame sight differnt. I tell you brethern right here an now, an lay it on the line, an bear

you my testamony, that I know beyond the peradventure of a doubt that the fullness a times, as mentioned in scripture, is about ketched up with us. An it behooves all a us—like you, Brother Tade, an Orson, here, an me—who ain't mebbe none of us what we're cracked up to be, to get our cracks up there where they ought a be.

"Fer soon the righteous 'll have their reward, as the scripture says, an the wicked 'll be burnt up like stubble."

Tade lifted his head and looked out over his grain-field. "Well, that's a fact, Obe," he said.

Obe shifted uncomfortably. He had felt for a moment as if he were that Obadiah mentioned in the Bible, or some other prophet. But now he realized he was only Obadiah A. Miller, the ornery, loud-mouthed, raggedy-assed shepherd of a wayward flock away out here in the wilderness, and all-to-hell honored in the calling. Only old Obe, as everyone called him; a man less concerned with prophecy than profits for himself and his people; a humble and distressed man now, whose crop, like all the rest, was out there burning.

He stood up.

"Well, I reckon we best be gittin on," he said. "You ready to shoot fer rain now, Brother Orson? You're the orator around here."

Orson arose, rebuked, meek, tall, with sagging shoulders. He wiped his eyes with the heel of his hand. A flustered smile again crossed his face. "Any time you say, Bishop."

"Fire away, then, Orson; an see ef you can't place a dent in her up there." Obe placed his hands behind him and closed his eyes. Tade rose stiffly from his haunches.

"Let us pray," Orson said. He raised his right hand, closed his eyes, and swallowed the lump down in his throat; then began low.

"Our Heavenly Father, we approach thee in humble supplement, that thou wilt hear us an grant us this day accordin to our needs. We pray that thou wilt remove the bars from before the

fountains a heaven, an open up the headgates an let thy waters pour down in great abundance over this wilderness. Let it rain in the mountains an collect in big torrents in the canyons an come a-rollin down inta the lakes an rivers an fill up our reservoys. Let it rain in the hills an on the flats an benches, an in the fiels and pastures, until not one square inch a ground in this whole country shall be left dry, an ever dyin an wilted thing in this whole land, from the baldies on the north to the badlands on the south, shall be revived an receive new life an lift up its head again. Let it rain until ever ditch in this whole country is full a water, an none a us needs to worry about whose turn it is."

"Amen!" Obe burst out. "That's a-givin it to her, Ors, by grab!"

Orson was sobbing. He waited to gain control of his feelings before going on.

"This is a hell of a country, Heavenly Father, which thou hast given us to magnify an replenish; an it ain't here like in some a thy choicer vineyards out around Salt Lake an Provo where thou hast established some a the favored, an hast blest the land, an the land is fruitful an perduces in great abundance. This here land ain't flowin with milk er honey, er anything but rattlesnakes an grief; an so hot sometimes even the lizards has to hop along the ground holdin to a stick, a-screamin ever time their tails touches the ground. This here land hates people an their animals an crops like poison an just wants to be left alone.

"Why, I remember, Heavenly Father, the first I ever knowed my wife to swear, to speak of, was right after we left Provo fifteen years ago an come out here to settle. She moped around a whole day, not sayin a word. Then next day she says to me, 'Damn a man who'd bring a woman to such a God Forsaken Country.' An it's the truth, Lord; it's the truth. This here land ain't been looked at by you in a thousand year, and there ain't no kindness in its heart fer God er man er beast. It's full a the Old Nick an ain't obliged to us none whatsoever. Why, even in good years

when the water is plentiful, the foxtail kills our cattle an the liverfluke kills our sheep, an always the surroundin hills an endless cliffs an gullies an rocks an cedars an sage brush is ugly an hateful-lookin to our wives an families, an the coyotes a-howlin at night sometimes till we can't say our prayers. An even the lonely graveyard up there on the hill where we have to blast the rocks to bust a hole to bury us finely, reminds us a how bitter the land is aginst us."

He lowered his arm to reach for his handkerchief, and blew his nose long and hard, then slowly replaced the handkerchief and raised his arm as before. "Now, Heavenly Father, we ask that thou wilt take note a our distress an send forth thy Holy Spirit upon this howlin wilderness to either make er break it; to bust this country wide open from top to tailbone an build it right from the bottom up, if necessary, so Saints kin stay on it an make a vineyard out a it like out around Salt Lake an Provo.

"An we humbly beseech thee, our Heavenly Father, to let all this come to pass, if it be thy will. Amen."

They said Amen, and looked at Orson wonderingly. Obe said that was the outspokenest prayer he'd heard in some time, and even Tade nodded approval. "Ors," he marveled, "you really hit er on the tailbone all right there in a place er two."

"You hit her right on the prayerbone, Brother Orson, like you had a swagehammer," Obe said softly. "But it runs in my mind the Lord won't pay much personal mind to that last part about bustin up the country ass-over-end as long as he has Saints with plenty a guts an elbow-grease to do er for Him—not if I know the Lord, He won't. Still, that part about the rain fallin until this here whole country is waist-deep under water was bustin her right in her old fat crooper up there.

"Well, we better be gittin along," Obe finished, "before we git flooded out."

"Sure glad ya called," Tade said. "Don't hurt none a us to have a little spiritchel waterin down once in a while."

"You try to get out to Church more often," Obe admonished, "an don't let Sister Larsen pull all the load for you an her."

"Yeh, sure," Tade replied.

They mounted up and made ready to head for the gulch. "Well, goodbye," Obe called. "Sure hope the Sisters do us some good at the prayin meetin."

"Sure, guess they will, soon or later," Tade answered. "Leastways they would if they all 'd get together an let fly in the same direction."

The afternoon wind was springing up and started shrilling around the corners of the house and through the screen door, grating on Tade's ears. He sat down glumly on the step again, watching Obe and Orson go. Big Obe sent back diminishing gales of laughter with the dust his horse was kicking up behind him, but cousin Ors apparently hadn't got the joke; or if he had, he hadn't thought it was funny. Tade didn't suppose it mattered, either way.

BOOKS and COMMENT

Geoffrey Wagner

CHARLES SPAAK AND THE THESIS FILM

THE TRICOLOR waves over the Palais de Justice. Three words are engraved on the ancient stone: LIBERTÉ–EGALITÉ–FRATERNITÉ. The camera drops a fraction. We see a harshly modern enamel plate–*Place d'Arrêt.*

This shot from *Avant le déluge,* written and co-directed by Charles Spaak, bespeaks the thesis, with all its attendant oversimplifications, of one of the most provocative screen writers working today–namely, that we are all assassins and that justice is never done. While the cinema in this country is suffering from an overdose of skill-fetichism (one technical gimmick after another vainly trying to make up for an emptiness of soul), and while the Italian realist film is proving steadily more inelastic, Spaak is quietly proceeding with the serious business of the cinema, enlarging it "in depth" by lending it that most unlikely dimension, real intellectual fervor. More than one of his films has been called "too talky" by *Time*–which is just fine these days. Above all, Spaak's recent work has that rare quality of having been written by someone who really needed and wanted to make each picture.

I say his recent work, for Spaak has a long and distinguished record as a writer in the cinema. Born in 1903, the son of a theatrical producer and brother of a future Belgian statesman of some consequence, Charles Spaak was responsible for writing *La Kermesse héroïque, La grande illusion* (with Jean Renoir), and *Le grand jeu,* before his present preoccupations with the problems

of justice and delinquent adolescence. Since the last war, however, he has added immeasureably to this reputation with four films, all written by him and co-directed with either Henri-Georges Clouzot or André Cayatte. These are *Retour à la vie* (where the brief episode dealing with Girard, played by Louis Jouvet, was written by Clouzot), *Justice est faite, Nous sommes tous des assassins,* and now *Avant le déluge.* These films show a progressive improvement and have established a genre—call it the thesis film or *cinéma engagé* if you wish—which is proving healthily corrective of "pure" cinema today.

Because of the controversial nature of these films, our elders and betters have decreed, at present writing, that only a mutilated version of the second of these four was safe to show in America, while the British have only so far seen the third mentioned, equally lacerated despite its "X" certificate there. Needless to say, the thesis film has to be seen *in toto.* However, the last three Spaak has helped to make have all dealt with problems of capital punishment—secondarily with juvenile delinquency—and one has to admit that *Avant le déluge,* in particular, contains some scenes made to measure for a picket-line of watchful veterans, while our legions of decency could ask for nothing better to keep them busy than the tender (yet significantly fatal) homosexual relationship in this film, let alone the happy scene in which a pleasantly extroverted seductress proudly bares her bosom before the prudish mother of the boy with whom she is in love.* These last three Spaak movies have all been big box-office successes in France and they make a rewarding trio to consider. *Retour à la vie,* though concerned with urgent post-war problems, is lineally linked with *La grande illusion,* since it deals largely with Franco-

* Thus keeping the Censors' scissors busy both sides of the Atlantic. While we in this country remove a naked backside from *Belles-de-Nuit,* the Swedish Board, numbering psychiatrists in its ranks, rips out the ultra-violent scenes from our Hollywood importations. In this connection I noted, when re-seeing *Pickup on South Street* in England recently, that the scene where the felonious hero Skip drags the Semitic Communist agent Joey face downwards down a stone subway staircase had been tactfully deleted.

German relations, especially as exemplified by the young Louis (excellently acted by Serge Reggiani) returning to France with his German Elsa.

Spaak, of course, is unconcerned about pleading any specific political position in these films, an impartiality to make him all the more "suspect" in our present black-and-white, right-and-wrong political cinema. In *Avant le déluge,* for instance, there is a World Citizen Professor who is constantly in barren argument with his Communist son, a distinction that might go unappreciated by the veteran picket-line I envisage for this movie in America. But these scenes simply re-emphasize Spaak's natural humanity. In them both World Citizen and Communist are guyed and chided. After the tragic end to their familial neglect they bicker for a moment over their pet differences, then are silenced by the accusation implicit in what has happened, by the worth of the human individual they have virtually both betrayed. Nor is Spaak hampered by having to be fair over his principal thesis. In an intelligent, and on the whole laudatory, notice of *Nous sommes tous des assassins* in *Sight and Sound,* David Fisher wrote, "As the title of his film reveals, André Cayatte is not fair. And for that reason I personally welcome him as a new and interesting personality in the cinema." It but remains for me to add the information that Cayatte was once a lawyer.

This attack on what we call justice, and this exposure of the corruption of innocents, Spaak likes to project by involving us in the life-stories of a number of individuals. In *Retour à la vie* we had five individuals making a post-war return to "life" in France. In *Justice est faite* we identify with seven jurors, in *Nous sommes tous des assassins* with five potential victims of the guillotine, in *Avant le déluge* with the parents of five guilty adolescents. Especially in this last film I found myself wishing the effects could have been achieved in another way, the flashback seems too cheap a device for so serious an artist as Spaak, but by the end of the film I was won over.

Each film contends, point by point, the arguments against its thesis. The intellectual tension, the "argument" in the true sense of the word, here lends a potentially new level to the cinema, gives the screen real philosophic importance. (We have seen literature on the screen, but not much literature as debate.) It is true that there have been previous thesis films—*Gentlemen's Agreement* was a weak example, *The Best Years of our Lives* a better, if slackly focussed, one—but the strength with which Spaak nails home his ideas lends an authentic stiffening to the celluloid image. There is a burning pressure behind the critique of anti-Semitism in *Avant le déluge* which one cannot help applauding, while in *Nous sommes tous des assassins,* where most of the action takes place in or from the death-cell, the film is literally advanced by argument. *Justice est faite* is not as well-made as the other two subsequent Spaak films—having seen Spaak "co"-directing I refrain from ascribing these films entirely to his partner (here again Cayatte)—but it is redeemed by the beautiful performance from Claude Nollier as Elsa Lundenstein, who has killed her cancer ridden lover-employer out of mercy. The seven jurors act out our collective responsibility. An aging lady, played by Valentine Tessier, votes not guilty, having been wounded in love. An old soldier, a delightfully drawn Army blimp, votes guilty. A plumber follows the aging lady juror, for whom he feels affection, and votes not guilty. A printer, the most complex character of all, has himself been tempted to the mercy killing of his criminally insane son but he is a good Catholic and must vote guilty. The waiter Félix, charmingly acted by Raymond Bussières, knows true love and forgives—he votes not guilty. A hard, unsympathetically seen farmer, acted by Marcel Pérès, votes guilty since he himself has just been cuckolded, and a fortune-hunting roué who turns out to be responsible for a love suicide (a murder in a sense worse than that under consideration) casts the die by voting guilty. Justice is done.

In the same way a variety of reactions from different individu-

als, conditioned by different environments and education, presents the thesis of *Nous sommes tous des assassins.* A doctor swears to the end that he is innocent. A Corsican vendetta murderer is executed, with the only result that elsewhere another murder must take place. An infanticide, who had killed in a fit of passion consequent on irresistible social conditions, is guillotined in what is ironically a similar revenge by society—in an act of societal masochism, if you will. We see cowards and brave men go to their deaths, until at the end the lost adolescent Le Guen, a Jean Genet character whose war "murders" when lent a gun by the maquis had been the delight of society, is left awaiting execution or reprieve—Spaak does not allow us to know which. As is the case with his two other thesis films we take a frightful question mark away with us.

In passing, I cannot sustain the adverse comparison David Fisher makes of this film with Bunuel's *Los Olvidados.* Although Bunuel has made more than one great film in the past, *Los Olvidados* cannot be allowed to join them, at least not by one who has lived in Mexico. It is a highly sentimental piece more concerned with cinematic mannerisms than with people, pepped up with a dash of fashionable nastiness (a sort of Soutine meat job) in order to give it "class." In fact, this sort of film is just what the philistine audience is looking for as an excuse for not taking cinema seriously. The care with which Spaak has avoided the pitfalls of such glib surrealism is, however, most encouraging, but occasionally he weakens and with a shrug tosses in something for the *Sight and Sound* boys (the "pure" cinema addicts), rather like a man throwing a cur a bone while he himself gets on with the real job on hand. Such a moment Mr. Fisher gleefully prizes out of *Nous sommes tous des assassins,* and I am happy to say it is atypical:

> The same sort of irony illuminates the predicament of Le Guen's young brother, Michel, when he is handed a chopper by his farmer-employer and told to kill the ducks—to kill the birds in a manner similar to that in which his brother will be killed.

Usually Spaak avoids this heavy, obvious symbolism, so dear to the "happy few" of our film press, and in *Avant le déluge* there is little of it. Here is a movie with a job to do, if ever there was one. It is certainly the best Spaak-Cayatte production to date and as a thesis film has already attracted its imitations, such as the inferior *L'âge de l'amour* (written by Carlo Rim who co-directs with Lionello de Felice) which has a similar thesis. *Avant le déluge,* in which the facetted cubism of Spaak's earlier writing is toned down, contains passages concerning the corruption of a "normal" homosexual relationship by society that reminded me forcefully of the first two books of Roger Martin du Gard's *Les Thibault.* In Spaak's case the deluge is World War III, a phenomenon the young see as entirely the responsibility of their elders and in which they want absolutely no part at all. Their struggle to escape is of course doomed, but this introduces a note novel to Spaak. With a mutinous calm Marina Vlady plays the part of that healthy, sensual, unquestioning adolescent who, for her Italian compatriot the novelist Moravia, represents innocence and yet totes fatality around. Her gift of a ring to swell the funds for escape to the desert island (when in reality she has to give herself), her confusion of the daily papers she must bring in with the breakfast bread (*Figaro* must be placed before her World Citizen father and *Humanité* in front of her Communist brother), her lack of ability in the eventual intrigue, her absolute certainty in love—these touches culminate in a character which boldly and beautifully extends the range of the drama. There is one delightful scene in which this girl, lacking money to buy herself new clothes, appears in a dress cut entirely from copies of *Humanité,* much to the fury of her brother who needed the newspapers for some of his fanatical intellectual research. Incidentally Spaak reemploys in these films not only several major actors, but also many of his minor players, such as Noel Roquevert, Jean Brochard, and Bernard Blieu.

The thesis film, such as Spaak has established, begs certain

questions. As the English critic Dilys Powell has observed, we have a right to know if the conditions of capital punishment in France are such as depicted in *Nous sommes tous des assassins* in order to be able to entertain the thesis seriously. Is it true that the condemned in France are kept together, shackled, in a brutally illumined cell, under perpetual supervision, during their last hours on earth? The *roman à thèse* must be ready—and the reader knows that it must be ready—to meet specific factual criticism on paper. Zola frequently met it on paper. But with the screen, it must be admitted, the situation is different. And this problem is, of course, a far more damaging criticism than that made against the loading of Spaak's camera-work or script. To say with Mr. Fisher that Spaak has shown himself uninterested in character except in a general sense (i.e. in "flat" rather than "round" characters, *the* neurasthenic, *the* disappointed lover, and so forth) strikes me as not only unfair, but as missing the point completely; to complain that he heard two ladies emerging from *Nous sommes tous des assassins* debating whether it was worse to know the date of one's execution rather than to be kept in ignorance of it is, so far as I am concerned, high praise indeed. If I met those same ladies discussing the symbolism of some surrealist passage in the film, then I should really begin to worry about Spaak's future. (How shabby and canonical certain stylistic devices of "pure" cinema can become is seen by a warning glance at *The Man Between*.)

To some extent I think Spaak has tried to meet the criticism outlined above in *Avant le déluge* by making this film far more "factually" contemporary. I do not mean "realist," for the true thesis film must make us live in a distorted world that yet projects certain salient truths more vividly. Here specific newspaper headlines, which we can all recognize, are seen. The Korean war wends its well-known way. The Communist *Humanité* is directly challenged. And it was interesting to see that the two indicated detective mysteries, picked up in his daughter's bedroom by a

worried father, were the two precisely calculated to corrupt youth—Spillane's *J'aurai ta peau (I, the Jury)*, and Boris Vian's *J'irais cracher sur vos tombes.*

As Mr. Fisher concedes, Spaak's loaded camera-work—the presentation of agents of justice, say—comes as rather a relief after so much of the reverse. Judges deliver sentence with coarsely concealed relish. Perhaps the prejudice against Germans (only hinted at, after all, in the whips and eau de cologne etc. of von Rauffenstein of *La grande illusion*) results in stereotyped shots of Nazi officers; but unfortunately Nazi officers appear to have behaved as caricatures of Nazi officers in Paris, which creates a difficulty for any sincere director. In any case *Nous sommes tous des assassins* contains that unforgettably original, if Germanophobe, shot of Le Guen disposing of the Nazi's body in a barrel-organ which is leaking blood, loving splash by splash. One need only think from this film, from the awful, tip-toeing advance of the minions of justice (uniformed police, top-hatted prison governors) down the vacant corridors to the condemned cell, where the prisoners know perfectly well they are coming anyway, to the brilliant shot of the plain-clothesmen waiting in the courtyard of the École Normale Supérieure to grill the Jewish student in *Avant le déluge*, in order to sense how passionately Spaak feels his intellectual points. It is a passion to which he is willing to sacrifice something of artistic, or rather cinematic, integrity, to be sure; for these exaggerations are hardly accidental, with a writer as intelligent as Spaak. Some can be seen, and condoned, as essential distortions, but some, dramatic as they may be, do remain slightly facile. (Would Spaak, one wonders, have left alone the telling final sequence of Dreiser's *Place in the Sun* where the lean Montgomery Clift leaves the death-cell past the pot-bellied priest and the laconically gum-chewing, equally portly cops?)

Indeed, Spaak is far more powerful when commenting by visual irony; the way in which a sick condemned man is protected and nursed back to health for the final knife says a very great deal

about our society. In the same way the last shots of *Avant le déluge* are deeply touching. Through the railings around the Palais de Justice we see the mother of one of the social victims walk forlornly off in search of a taxi. We know that the Korean peace has been signed, yet the newsvendors are plucking their copies of *France-Soir* off their stands to the cries of "GUERRE DE PÉTROLE." The word *guerre,* the dreadful incidental music of our days, hangs in the air like an accusation itself. We see the crumbling, heroic facades of Paris, pitted against which are the appurtenances of modernity, métros and motor cars, and gradually the camera draws up to the railings enclosing this place of justice and we realize they are bars. Surely one may conclude that Spaak is one of the few writers in the cinema today daring to engage in controversial issues. (*Salt of the Earth,* an amazingly sincere and, I'm afraid, over-simplified film made by an American union, was a daring effort in this direction; but the writing was not of Spaak's standard.) For this much must be forgiven him on the technical side. In *Retour à la vie* Louis says to his nationalist sister Yvonne, "il y a pire que la cruauté des guerres, c'est leur stupidité." And it is stupidity, in the wake of modern war, which this man of good will has so relentlessly analyzed for our benefit.

BRIEF REVIEWS

The Mirror and the Lamp, by M. H. Abrahms. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953. 406 pp. $7.50.

THE MIRROR represents the mind which is a mere reflector of the objects it beholds; as a convenient explanation of the creative processes, this figure prevailed "from Plato to the eighteenth century." The Lamp signifies the mind which projects outward upon and so contributes to the objects of its perceptions; suggesting the interaction of an inner with an outer world, the joint effect of passion and external nature, this image typifies the peculiarly romantic conception of creativity. *The Mirror and the Lamp*, accordingly, is an extended treatment of two distinct theories of the origins of art, and an analysis of how the mimetic tendencies of the first were challenged and displaced by the self-expressive impulses inherent in the last. But in the book, the Lamp is at once the more significant metaphor and the one most central to the investigation as a whole. For just as Mr. Abrahms is more concerned with the romantics than with the critical tradition they abandoned, so he is primarily interested in the *how* of romantic poetry—in the mental urges and forces and processes which brought such poetry into being—and not in the poetry itself.

Consequently, his study becomes an elaborate treatise on the psychology of romantic composition. Mind, the dynamic, organic, formative mind of romanticism, is here charted through all its various manifestations. It superimposes subjective states over the objective world, and the results are such familiar romantic properties as symbolism, lyricism, metaphor, personification. It discovers a mysterious capacity for inner growth, finds this same growth recapitulated in the development of biological organisms, shapes the finished poem to the pattern of this development; the result is organic form, that complex romantic doctrine for which Mr. Abrahms offers an unusually comprehensible explanation. In the work of art, creating mind is presumed to shadow forth its inmost recesses (composing poetry, as John Keble wrote in the 1830's, "gives healing relief to secret mental emotions"); and among romantic critics like Keble, Blake and Carlyle, we find adumbrated the Freudian's propensity for shifting from the text to its source in the author's subconscious. Above all, the romantic mind participates dynamically in the creative act: like an all-working deity, it *makes* the poem; and the poem in turn is a self-sufficient second

Creation, a heterocosm freed from all necessary reference to outer reality, responsible only to its own laws and to the inner genius which gave it being. These, then, are characteristic of the topics Mr. Abrahms explores most incisively. Although he writes ably and at length on diverse spokesmen for the Mirror, the stress in his work falls, as I have said, on the functionings of the Lamp. Hence it is in terms of its exposition of romantic aesthetics that *The Mirror and the Lamp* must ultimately be judged.

With some justice, one can say that the book presents a thesis which is not absolutely new. But the fact that the same ground has, to some extent, already been covered should not obscure the value of this particular coverage. For one thing, Mr. Abrahms' is surely the fullest account. Broad in scope, drawing freely from English and German sources alike, it does shed new light on the romantic revolution and does deal intensively with specific problems (organicism and Coleridge's view of the imagination are prime examples) which other recent critics have been inclined to distort or to treat with condescension. Still more importantly perhaps, the book forces us to reconsider certain major romantic writers in their proper intellectual context. Mr. Abrahms holds little brief for the tendency to "modernize" Coleridge by pretending that he was somehow not a romantic—by stripping his criticism of its philosophical bases or quietly ignoring some of his more abstruse terminology. Assuming Coleridge to be the leading critical theorist of the romantic movement, he makes the corollary assumption that the general background of romanticism provides the best possible insight into Coleridge's ambiguities. His several sections on Coleridgean aesthetics are models of clear, precise explication; one feels that they possess an enduring significance. Finally, this investigation is sometimes valuable for what it suggests as well as explicitly says. Both romantic prose and symbolist techniques are peripheral to the main drift of the study. Yet through indirect references to the symbolic imagination, Mr. Abrahms enlarges our understanding of writers like Hazlitt and De Quincey, whom he mentions only in passing, and even of romantic novelists like the Brontës, who do not appear at all.

In contemporary scholarship the trend has been to push romanticism backward into the eighteenth century, to underscore—possibly to exaggerate—the kinship between Classic and Romantic. As the key metaphors indicate, *The Mirror and the Lamp* deals mainly with differences rather than with similarities. It is not a narrowly partisan

book. The very breadth of the literary history forestalls any real hardening of the metaphors into ironclad categories. But aware that Wordsworth can sound like Johnson or that Coleridge is indebted to Hartley, Mr. Abrahms is likewise careful to qualify these resemblances and to refrain from overstating their closeness. Perhaps, indeed, this is his principal achievement. Certainly the Lamp did not suddenly commence to glow in 1798. Nevertheless, the romantics did modify their literary heritage. And by demonstrating how romanticism rejected the imitative standards of earlier poetics and turned inward for poetic inspiration, *The Mirror and the Lamp* presents clear-cut evidence of the modification.

CLARK GRIFFITH

At the Turning, by Martin Buber. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952. 62 pp. $1.50.

IN A one-sentence prologue to these three addresses Professor Buber reminds the reader "that a Jew speaks here to Jews, in the center of the Diaspora, in the hour when the deciding crisis of Judaism begins to become manifest." However, Buber's restatement of his position in this small book should prove interesting to non-Jews as well. While there is almost nothing new in these lectures, nothing that Buber has not said before, they are an excellent and succinct distillation of his religious thought. They are also a moving call to the Jewish people to return to a God-centered life, and in so doing to hasten mankind's salvation.

Buber sees every "great" civilization as a life-system which grows out of a supreme principle. (How we can distinguish "great" civilizations from others is never made clear.) The supreme principle is both religious and normative. By "religious" Buber means that it involves attachment to an absolute transcendent Being. By "normative" he means that this Being exemplifies the ideal toward which man feels obligated to move. "Everywhere transcendent Being has a side facing toward man which represents a shall-be; everywhere man, if he wants to exist as man, must strive after a super-human model; everywhere the outline of a true human society is traced in Heaven." Finally, in every great civilization man rebels against the ideal demands, de-

mands which he acknowledges to be binding. "But it is precisely in this mute struggle of man with the spirit that the rise of a great civilization originates. The spirit conquers and is conquered, it advances and is checked, it hits upon the human materia and finds in it a barrier; and here, in the lulls of the fighting between Heaven and earth, there emerges, again and again, the specific forms of a civilization which also determine all its wisdom and art."

Israel, Buber believes, is a unique expression of these tendencies which are present in the structure of all civilization. Every civilization has its attachment to God and its commission to fashion its life in accordance with the supreme principle which derives from God, "but only Israel knew a God Who had chosen a human people—just that people—to prepare the created earth as a kingdom for Him by the realization of justice." Only in Israel is all of life thought to be hallowed. Only in Israel does all of life respond to the divine command. For it was "that civilization in which, as in no other, the absolute had made a covenant with the entire domain of human existence and refused to abandon any part of that domain to relativity." The prophets of Israel are the highest teachers of this absolute demand. Buber finds the ceaseless effort to sanctify every aspect of human life joined with the militant battle against the backsliding of ordinary men to be unique in prophetic Judaism. No other civilization has been completely dedicated to the call of God. But through the force of historical circumstance Israel has been denied the opportunity to bring to fruition its own deepest motivations. It has been denied the opportunity to sanctify the whole of its life, and thus has been unable to bring about for all peoples the kingdom of God. However, Judaism is not dead, and Israel is not dead. The roots are still healthy even if the branches have withered. Buber calls Israel to save itself and to save the world.

In the last two addresses Buber attempts an exposition of Judaism. He wants to tell his Jewish audience (and only incidentally anyone else who may be listening) who they really are and what their tradition really is. All too often Judaism has been rejected by Jews and non-Jews primarily because they had failed to penetrate its outer shell and to capture its inner motivations and inner spirit. What Jews like Bergson and Simone Weil rejected was a misshapen caricature of Judaism which did not even bear a resemblance to the genuine Jewish tradition. When Judaism is seen through the eyes of Christianity it will inevitably be misapprehended. The Christian picture shows

the God of Judaism as "a God of justice who exercised justice essentially on His own people, Israel, being followed in Christianity by a God of love, of love for humanity as a whole." It hardly seems necessary to lay this ghost again. Fair-minded Christian scholars have shown repeatedly what a warped picture this is of Judaism. Nevertheless, Buber feels driven to show again, what every one should know by now, that the God of Judaism combines justice with love, and that both are extended to all mankind, not only to the Jewish people.

Buber also disposes of the conventional view that the spirit has no place in Judaism, or that it is, at best, so overburdened by the law that it can never express itself. He shows, on the contrary, that Judaism is essentially spirituality, but a spirituality which goes into the world rather than one which withdraws from the world. "It is not true that Israel has not accorded to spiritual inwardness its rightful place; rather, it has not contented itself with it. Its teachings contest the self-sufficiency of the soul: inward truth must become real life, otherwise it does not remain truth. A drop of Messianic consummation must be mingled with every hour; otherwise the hour is Godless, despite all piety and devoutness." Buber then goes on to show the falsity of the notions that Judaism exalts the corporate body of society above the individual and that it is concerned only with Jewish society rather than with all humanity.

In the third address, "The Dialogue Between Heaven and Earth," there is a restatement of Buber's I-Thou philosophy. "The basic doctrine which fills the Hebrew Bible," he says, "is that our life is a dialogue between the above and the below." Judaism is not primarily dogma or creed. It is not, in its essence, a frozen system of ritual practices or moral prescriptions. It is rather the wholly sanctified life of justice and love which flows from man's encounter with God. He speaks to us not only in the pages of Scripture but in all the "essential moments of personal life." We can answer not with words, but rather through the "language of our actions and attitudes, our reactions and our abstentions." Nor does God speak only to individuals. Scripture teaches us that he speaks also to Israel as a people. Communal life, like personal life, finds the way to sanctification only in the encounter with the divine. "The people is not a sum of individuals addressed by God, it is something existent beyond that, something essential and irreplaceable, meant by God as such, claimed by Him as such, and answerable to Him as such." The distinction between "moral man and immoral society," which Niebuhr made famous in our own time, is

intolerable to Buber and intolerable to Judaism. This is why he addresses himself both to individual Jews and to the Jewish community. Neither the individuals nor the community may be freed from their historic responsibility. Buber, playing the role of the prophet, seeks to awaken the Jewish people. His addresses are not arguments or demonstrations. They are, rather, the moving expression of the faith of a man which he identifies with the faith of Israel. And through this faith he calls the Jewish people to return to their roots, to stand again before God, and thereby to bring salvation to the world.

There is no doubt that Buber has offered us a legitimate representation of Judaic and Biblical faith. Even though Judaism is richer and more complex than he seems able to recognize, Buber has seized on one of the central messages in all Jewish teaching. It is the doctrine that as individuals and as a community the Jewish people have a responsibility for the spiritual health of mankind. This is perhaps epitomized in a passage which Buber wrote forty years ago when he delivered a similar set of addresses to the Jews of Prague. He closes the first of his *Drei Reden über das Judentum* with this story:

> When I was a child I read an old Jewish saying which I could not understand. These were the words: "At the gates of Rome a leprous beggar sits and waits. He is the Messiah." I went to an old man and asked him, "For what is he waiting?" The old man gave me an answer which I did not understand then, and only came to understand much later; he said, "He is waiting for you."

Buber believes today as he did then that the Messiah is waiting for each of us to free him from his chains.

MARVIN FOX

African Folktales and Sculpture. Folktales selected and edited by Paul Radin with the Collaboration of Elinore Marvel. Introduction to the tales by Paul Radin. Sculpture selected with an introduction by James Johnson Sweeney. New York: Pantheon Books (Bollingen Series XXXII), 1952. 165 plates, map. 355 pp. $8.50.

THE BOLLINGEN Series has maintained a high standard of bookmaking in all of their publications. Once again the series has been enriched by the publication of an exceptionally beautiful book. The

collaborative effort of the book designer (Andor Braun), the distinguished book jacket and poster artist (E. McKnight Kauffer), and of two of America's finest photographers (Walker Evans and Eliot Elisofon), has resulted in the making of this handsome volume.

Certainly the materials presented here—some of the best tales from world folk literature, and the very finest pieces of sculpture from one of the great plastic traditions—were worth all the care that the bookmaker has lavished on this publication. It is to be regretted that the work of the authors, Dr. Radin and Mr. Sweeney, falls short of the mark. They have not succeeded in producing more than a handsome anthology of African folklore, and a well-mounted catalogue of sculpture. As such it might have fared better as two separately published works, for there is no attempt at an integration between the plastic and the literary traditions of these African tribes. Nor is there a welding together of the aesthetic approach of the art critic with the cultural interpretation of the anthropologist.

This need not be the case. It should no longer be maintained that the artist (and art critic) and the anthropologist must view man's aesthetic works from mutually exclusive vantage points. The fact is that a common meeting ground exists which may be shared by the anthropologist sensitive to plastic (and literary) values, and the art historian (and critic) who is discerning of the cultural matrix of the arts. The joint work of Ralph Linton and Paul S. Wingert in their *Arts of the South Seas* has demonstrated that the reader is the richer for their dual approach. Because Dr. Radin has not ventured out from his corner sufficiently, and Mr. Sweeney not at all, this book does not achieve the professed objective of the Bollingen Series: "The Series, in brief, comprises works that contribute to the interrelation of ideas leading towards a synthesis of knowledge."

One has the impression that this is one of those book ideas that has come from the publisher, rather than from the author. Of course, editors often spark ideas which combust in the minds of writers with full force. But in this case the spark had little effect; that is, little effect if the objective of this book was that of the Bollingen manifesto.

The book at hand comes off better if we criticize it as two separate works, an anthology plus a catalogue.

Dr. Radin, with consummate skill, selected from many volumes of folktales, most of which are unavailable to the layman, some of the very best. Radin well knows that in primitive cultures, as in our own western civilization, every teller of tales is not a literary artist, and

every tale in the ethnographers' monograph does not have aesthetic merit. By choosing only the best Radin has demonstrated that "We are, essentially, in the presence of a true art form, often possessing a high degree of sophistication and formalism."

The author has not attempted to give the reader the ethnological background of each group represented in the collection of tales. But he has given the lay reader some generalizations which distinguish negro Africa as an area of folklore style. These similarities of form and content outweigh the minor tribal and regional differences. A characteristic that runs through all of negro African folk literature is the tale of strife, of man pitted against man living in a world made insecure and semi-chaotic by European conquest. The author-raconteur points the moral in his tales: death is the inevitable fate for those who do not stand up to the conquerors.

Mr. Sweeney's introduction to the second part of the book is in large part a rehash of his earlier *African Negro Art,* published as a catalogue to the exhibit he assembled for the Museum of Modern Art in 1935. Many of the plates which follow are from the same source. In that volume Mr. Sweeney wrote:

> In the end, however, it is not the tribal characteristics of Negro art nor its strangeness that are interesting. It is its plastic qualities. Picturesque or exotic features as well as historical considerations have a tendency to blind us as to its true worth.

The author has modified this point of view in the present volume, for here he writes:

> The Non-African can only hope to respond directly through his visual experience—his personal non-African eye. But the more he can bring to the basic sculptural expression the richer will be his response and enjoyment. That will be the gift of the ethnographer; the widening of horizons, the broadening of our embrace, the opening of new fields of aesthetic experience to explore into which, alone, we might never find our way.

It is evidently the intent of Mr. Sweeney to let the reader widen his own anthropological horizons with respect to African sculpture, for he does not incorporate into his introduction, nor even refer the reader to, such a work as that of the Africanist Dr. Melville Herskovits, *Backgrounds of African Art.* In that short volume the artist and art critic steeped only in the western plastic traditions will find the "widening of horizons" which Mr. Sweeney now exhorts.

JOHN ADAIR

COMMENT

Eliot Among the Nightingales: Fair and Foul

"...c'est pour les oiseaux."—Baudelaire.

"I am ... befouled."—*The Family Reunion.*

"Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop."—*The Waste Land.*

ALTHOUGH critical and analytical examinations of the poetry of T. S. Eliot abound in such numbers that further exegesis and commentary would seem to be, to say the least, supererogatory, a recent reading of the *ouevre* has revealed to me a hitherto undiscussed aspect of the poet's thought and imagery. Eliot's principal symbols are, of course, familiar to the man in the street, thanks to the many detailed studies of his metaphor. The merest novice in literature knows the significance of Eliot's use of the wheel, the rose garden, the rock, water, hair, and hyacinths, to name only a few of the recurrent symbols. But an exceptionally revealing insight into the poet's mind and art may be had through a consideration of another cluster of objects which function symbolically in his work—a strand of imagery both complex and subtle, which, unaccountably, has never yet been the subject of close examination.

We may begin by noting some significant terminology in an important exchange between Agatha and Harry, in *The Family Reunion.* Describing a crucial experience from her past, Agatha associates it most clearly with a particular observed detail: "And then a black raven flew over." Harry, attuned to his aunt's psychic wave-length, responds intuitively, and meaningfully refers to a similar experience as "the awful evacuation." And a few moments later he speaks of his present predicament in the following relevant phrase: "I am still befouled." Describing elsewhere the nature of this feeling, in somewhat greater detail, he says:

> ... the slow stain sinks deeper through the skin
> Tainting the flesh and discolouring the bone—
> ... it is unspeakable.

And a further detail:

> You do not know
> The noxious smell untraceable in the drains.

This feeling is also developed several times in *Murder in the Cathedral,* in the choruses spoken by the women of Canterbury:

> . . . now a new terror has soiled us,
> Which none can avert, none can avoid,
> Flowing under our feet and over the sky.

And again:

> We are soiled by a filth that we cannot clean . . .
> It is not we alone, it is not the house, it is not the city that is defiled,
> But the world that is wholly foul.
> Clear the air! clean the sky! wash the wind!

The source of this defilement is referred to in terms which confirm Agatha's symbol:

> The Lords of Hell are here.
> They . . . swing and wing through the dark air.

Furthermore,

> . . . through the dark air
> Falls the stifling scent . . . ;
> The forms take shape in the dark air.

The various forms which "take shape in the dark air" are remarkably numerous throughout the body of Eliot's work; a few of the more interesting ones will be enumerated below. It is relevant to note first, however, that they are not motiveless, nor is their behavior purely instinctive:

> . . . the . . . hawk
> Will only soar and hover, circling lower,
> Waiting excuse, pretence, opportunity.
> *(Murder in the Cathedral)*

And it will be recalled that the bird which flits through "Burnt Norton" is full of imperatives (perhaps to his companions): "Quick, said the bird, find them, find them"; and also "Go, go, go, said the bird."

The somewhat nervous speaker in "A Cooking Egg" asks the apprehensive question, "Where are the eagles?" This is answered, if obliquely, by the pained exclamation of the spectator of the parade in "Triumphal March," who says, "And so many eagles!" and later, as if in desperation (note the shift): "But how many eagles!" How-

ever, "The Eagle [which] soars in the summit of Heaven" (*The Rock*, Chorus I) is not the only bird inhabiting Eliot's aviary. The smallest are "The small creatures [which] chirp thinly through the dust" in "Difficulties of a Statesman." "Gerontion" finds a gull sailing against the wind, and "Ash Wednesday" exhibits a "dove descending [which] breaks the air", and "The cry of quail and whirling plover," as well as "seaward flying / Unbroken wings."[1]

The images of bird life are frequently found in conjunction with images of water, naturally enough. In "Ash Wednesday," for example, "the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down." The first section of "Burnt Norton" describes the effects capable of being wrought by a bird (the same one which urges his fellows to "Go, go, go"):

> Dry the pool, dry concrete . . .
> And the pool was filled with water . . .

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight drowned, "forgot the cry of gulls"; himself a part of the water now, he is no longer pained to worry like the others: "What is that sound high in the air?"

The "sound high in the air" is represented variously by Eliot. In "The Waste Land," we find the sounds created as "Twit, twit," "Tereu," "Co co rico," and "Jug, jug."[2] But the most explicit of all these is the sound of the hermit-thrush, which goes quite simply, "Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop." The poet's attitude toward all this is that of despairing acceptance. Thus, in "New Hampshire," he exclaims, apparently to bird-dom in general:

> Black wing, brown wing, hover over;
> . . . .
> Cover me over . . .

As the result of this attitude, the poet concludes (in "Lines to a Persian Cat") that "Beneath the trees there is no ease," for the quite evident reason that this is where "The songsters of the air repair." This same distrust of trees is echoed in two poems of the fragmentary *Coriolan*. In "Triumphal March" the "palmtree at noon" is inextricably associated with the symbol of "running water"; in "Difficul-

[1] The title of *The Cocktail Party*, needless to say, includes another reference to a bird of a sort.

[2] Incidentally, the "Jug, jug" reference, while perhaps adequately explained by Edmund Wilson, may have another meaning, particularly when taken in conjunction with the exclamation in Part V—"O swallow swallow." I do not think that this collocation has ever been pointed out before.

ties of a Statesman" the emotion is so intense that the protagonist finds himself speaking in broken phrases:

> O hidden under the . . . Hidden under the . . .
> Where the dove's foot rested and locked for a moment,
> . . . under the upper branches of noon's widest tree.

Eliot mocks those who are able to be truly at ease under a tree, by parodying their unquestioning acceptance. In the "Fragment of an Agon" from *Sweeney Agonistes*, the jazz lyric satirizes the failure or the renunciation of discrimination.

> Tell me in what part of the wood
> Do you want to flirt with me?
> Under the breadfruit, banyan, palmleaf
> Or under the bamboo tree?
> Any old tree will do for me
> Any old wood is just as good . . .

Of all the various winged forms which wreak their vengeance from the air, however, none is more frightful than the eponymous beast in "The Hippopotamus." It will be recalled that, toward the end of the poem,

> The 'potamus takes wings
> Ascending from the damp savannas

The terrifying possibilities inherent in this transmogrification are realized in Harry's words from *The Family Reunion*, as he refers with horror to "The unexpected crash of the iron cataract."[3]

It is only thus when we examine Eliot's concept of birds ("The Lords of Hell") as embodiments of (literally) "un-earthly" evil that we are able to account for a facet of his career which other critics have resolutely avoided, tacitly ignored, or politely assumed to be irrelevant. This is, of course, his role as the creator of the "Book of Practical Cats." These poems which have not as yet been given the critical examination they so richly deserve, are clearly not incidental to his main development, but are part of it. This is not the place to undertake an extended discussion of the poems,[4] but it is certainly not amiss

[3] The women of Canterbury may also be referring to this vision when, in enumerating the possibilities of Death, they chant of "the sudden shock upon the skull."

[4] An analysis demonstrating that the poems are an intricately-constructed symbolic structure dealing with the theme of Original Sin (and incidentally tracing the influences of Kierkegaard, Rilke, Dante, Edgar Wallace, and Massinger) is in the process of preparation by the author.

to point out that the natural enemies of birds are—cats. Nor should the significant adjective be overlooked. These are not idle house pets but active and energetic creatures; they are "practical" in the sense in which Lavinia, in *The Cocktail Party,* uses the word. Rejecting the ability to fill out an income-tax blank as evidence of practicality, she says, "When I say practical, I mean practical in the things that really matter." The alert reader of Eliot is, of course, aware (1) that the Chamberlayne household has no bird as pet; and (2) that Lavinia reveals herself as capable of being exceptionally "catty." In the final act, the reconciliation is partly due to Edward's recognition of his wife's quality. "You have a very practical mind," he tells her then.

• • •

"Suffering is action," Eliot has written. But some action may be taken to prevent suffering—this is the implication of another major strand of imagery which must be seen in its proper relationship to the symbols of the birds. There are two modes of response to the existence of implacable evil from above. Harry Monchensey's decision to go into the desert, like that of Celia Coplestone, represents one way of outwitting the birds (there are no trees in the desert). The other way is to adopt some kind of covering, some defense, which may be either a hood, mantle, cap ("cape"), or hat. This second mode of response may be defined as the principle of protective coveration. It is clearly Eliot's intention to contrast those who adopt such a principle with those who do not. "Lines for Cuscuscaraway and Mirza Murad Ali Beg" describes Mr. Eliot as possessing "a wopsical hat"; the picture is satirical but not unfavorable. On the other hand, the companion piece has a sharply malicious tone; in "Lines to Ralph Hodgson Esqre." the significant lines are

> He has 999 canaries
> And round his head finches and fairies . . .

This bird-lover is obviously a friend of the "Lords of Hell," whereas the "unpleasant" Mr. Eliot may be described as wearing a fragment which he shores up against the ruins.

"The Waste Land," it will be recalled, contains many people who adopt this principle: "Who are these hooded hordes?" asks the protagonist in amazement. And he notices especially another figure:

> There is always another one . . .
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded . . .

(It is not irrelevant to note that we are meant to associate this figure with the Journey to Emmaus.)

A detail bothersome to previous critics of "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" may now be cleared up easily. The reason for the peculiar attire worn by the lady who attempts Sweeney's seduction—a Spanish cape—should now be apparent, especially when it is remembered that the scene takes place in a neighborhood where nightingales abound; furthermore, there is evidence in the poem that these particular nightingales have been at their "liquid siftings" for some time, a habit which would necessitate one's wearing a large garment for protection whenever venturing out.

Eliot uses the technique of "covering up" his meaning at the same time that he is dealing with the subject of "covering-up," a source of rich ambiguity and ironic tension, as well as fruitful paradox, in his poetry. Thus he is able to operate simultaneously at the levels of concrete generalities and general details. One instance of this practice is the precise naming of hats (perhaps a sly parallel echo to "The Naming of Cats") throughout his poems, while still managing to disguise what he is doing. Thus, upon close scrutiny "The Waste Land" reveals three obvious names of hats. The most obvious (and therefore the one which previous critics have never been able to account for) is found in the exclamation of the protagonist at the end of "The Burial of the Dead." His friend's name, of course, is—*Stetson!* In the chorus of the Thames nymphs, the sails are depicted as swinging to "*Lee*ward," and "past the Isle of Dogs" (which, with but slight alteration, may be read as "*Dobbs*"). In the fourth section of "East Coker," there is a significant reference to "*Adam*'s curse." And finally, to conclude this brief but I trust convincing demonstration of a recurrent device in Eliot, there is his extremely subtle use of the repeated "KNOCK" at the conclusion of *Sweeney Agonistes:* a series of "knocks" *(Knox).*

The hats may be of various kinds: we recall the "silk hat of a Bradford millionaire" in "The Waste Land," the straw "headpiece" of "The Hollow Men," and Celia Coplestone's urgent "feelings" (her *felt* need). But regardless of type or make, the "cover" is a necessity. And so, fittingly, under "cover" of madness, at the conclusion of "The Waste Land," Eliot-Hieronymo undertakes to pass on to his sensitive and understanding auditors the most profound truths granted him by his intelligence and poetic vision. You must take cover, he cries, and if you do—

Why then Ile fit you.

CHARLES KAPLAN

Private Views, by "Thersites"*

Reference: "The *Pervigilium Phœnicis,*" by Niall Montgomery. *New Mexico Quarterly,* Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (Winter 1953), 437-472.

THE STUDY of the works of James Joyce is, we all know by now, a minor industry, with its factory headquarters in the U.S.A. Joyce, of course, is a "sitter" for the academic journeyman. There is material enough in him for countless Ph.D. theses. There is even material for a good book about him—though nobody ever seems to have got around to writing it.

The Ph.D. students must now, however, be scurrying for shelter, hastily dismantling their elaborate apparatus, and wondering whether the whole job can be re-assembled from the bottom up within the statutory time. For a native scholar has spoken. It is so rarely the native scholars do speak: but when they do, the tone is unmistakably magisterial and authoritative. And what is more, this native scholar has spoken on the foreign students' home ground. He is Mr. Niall Montgomery, who has an article on Joyce, called "The Pervigilium Phœnicis," in the current issue of the *New Mexico Quarterly.*

Mr. Montgomery's learned, subtle and witty article cannot fail to win admiration. Even in presentation it is impressive. To nine pages of text there are appended 23 pages of footnotes (much of which are obligingly supplied by Mr. J. A. Joyce), and footnotes within footnotes, not to mention footnotes within footnotes within footnotes. It is a Byzantine performance which could hardly have failed to elicit the enthusiastic approval of the Master. The brief article itself is closely-printed and full of echo-hunting and pun-hunting of a complexity that is guaranteed to turn any rival Joycean green with envy. This is a short sample of Mr. Montgomery in the brief, crowded night of "Phoenix's Wake":

> Constructionally, Original Sin is the engine of duality. Given One in Three, Adam added One to One and made Two. Alternatively, he may be taken as introducing to Good its opposite, Evil, and thus creating the archetype of mortal symbiosis: this assumes an axis, and another identity: x—x=o. But, as in Genesis, the 'addition' had a visual aspect: . . . *the eyes of*

* Reprinted courtesy *The Irish Times* (Dublin), April 24, 1954.

both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked. Self-consciousness, Narcissus' State, was added to the Union, when Adam saw, in Eve, a self that was not himself. The coincidence of opposites.

This is a kind of writing which, though I understand it only imperfectly, I feel compelled to take off my hat to. And, if Mr. Montgomery will not feel offended at a suggestion from a mere neophyte, I think he might expand his thesis of the reconciliation of opposites, mirror-images, and so on, by pushing back past Plotinus, whom he draws on heavily, to the old sage, Heraclitus.

Still, though I admire Mr. Montgomery's essay and heartily recommend it to anyone in search of a rousing session at the intellectual parallel bars, I must confess that it leaves me less than happy. I remain unconvinced that Joyce was really an important writer; that he was anything more than a very agile verbal and stylistic acrobat.

He was, of course, a remarkably intelligent man—and a very sensitive one. But one remark by A. E. has always stuck in my mind as getting to the heart of the matter about Joyce: "Young man, I do not know whether you are a fountain or a cistern, but I think you have not enough chaos in you to make a world." The neat, pedantic and intensely contrived floridness of Joyce is like the extreme forms of Churriguerresque architecture—it merely conceals the fact that behind the façade there is nothing at all.

Joyce was an artificial writer—in the sense that he had really nothing to say; but he had an expert, acquired knowledge of how to appear to be saying something when you are saying nothing at all. *Punch* in the last century used to portray Irishmen as looking rather like apes. Joyce gave some reality to this caricature by becoming the chimpanzee of literature.

The absurd suggestion—to which, I regret to say, Mr. Montgomery lends some colour—that "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake" are great Universal Works summing up human knowledge and experience in masterfully orchestrated symphonies is all too current. It has gained support because most people, very rightly, do not read these sterile and unrewarding works. "Ulysses" has moments that show that Joyce would have made a very good reporter: "Finnegans Wake" is a farrago, not of universal wisdom, but of all the discarded shards, of the abracadabra that keeps cropping up as "wisdom" in Western Europe.

Mr. Montgomery is a great believer in the pun. The pun, of course,

is the decadent flower of a philosophy which has come to believe that language has a separate existence of its own apart from the people who use it for purely practical purposes. It is with regret that I feel impelled to use the word "reactionary," for it is a dreadful and not very useful word. But, in so far as it has any meaning at all, it does apply to Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Joyce. They are both rooting in the slag-heaps, while civilisation has moved on.

Genevieve Porterfield

A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE OF THE SOUTHWEST, XLIX

THIS BIBLIOGRAPHY attempts to list, with such thoroughness as time and resources permit, current materials dealing with the Southwest. The Southwest, as here defined, includes all of New Mexico, Arizona and Texas, and parts of Utah, Oklahoma, Colorado and California.

In order to conserve space, items from periodicals that are indexed in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature,* the *Education Index,* the *Industrial Arts Index* and the *Agricultural Index* have been eliminated.

Included in this issue are mainly those titles which were published or came to our attention between December, 1953 and February, 1954.

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lections. Although her permanent residence is Westtown, Pennsylvania, she is now living in Paris. Miss Sparhawk-Jones is exclusively represented by the Frank K. M. Rehn Gallery, New York City.

GEOFFREY WAGNER, ex Welsh Guards and Oxford, now lives in New York City. He has published novels, books of poetry and translation, and articles both here and in England. His book *Parade of Pleasure*, (a study of popular culture in the U.S.), will be out this fall (London: Verschoyle; N.Y.: British Book Centre). He is currently working on a study of Wyndham Lewis.

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Autumn 1954: LATIN-AMERICAN ISSUE

JORGE LUIS BORGES — "Death and the Compass" (story)

ESTHER MCCOY — "The Best Chess in Cuernavaca" (story)

RUFINO TAMAYO — Art Feature

CALVERT CASEY — "The Walk" (story)

ANTHONY KERRIGAN — Unamuno (essay review)

ARTHUR L. CAMPA — review of Suárez Carreño's *The Final Hours*

JOHN ENGLEKIRK — review of Ramón J. Sender's *El Verdugo Afable*

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LESLIE SPIER — "Some Aspects of the Nature of Culture"

JOHN DILLON HUSBAND — Omnibus Poetry Review

Winter 1954: NEW WRITERS — a group of first acceptances in the short story